

CHINESE LITERATURE



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An Old Hunter Bears Witness

"Think how far mankind has travelled in time — several thousand years at least — from the dug-out canoes of our early ancestors to modern motor boats. No matter how long-lived a man, you wouldn't expect his life to span that gap, would you? But you'd be wrong. I know an old fellow to prove it."

Chung Yi-ping, chief of a surveying team, proceeded to tell me the story of an old hunter in the Tarim Basin. I am trying to write it down in his own words.

I

In 1957, the surveying of the Tarim Basin began, and several surveying teams started out at the same time. I took a team of geologists to strike north across a corner of the Taklamakan Desert to survey the area between the Hotien and Tarim Rivers. Our expedition was

Teng Pu is a young writer.

Teng Pu

to prepare the way for a P.L.A. construction corps to open up this region. No sooner did we reach the desert, though, than our guide fell ill and our Uighur surveyor Abdulla had to take his place.

The Taklamakan must be one of the bleakest deserts in the world, the sky above it nothing but a yellow pall over a vast expanse of yellow sand. The Mazar Tagh Mountain rises grotesquely here, entirely red on one side, white on the other. We found withered grass rustling by an old tomb on its summit, and beyond it the road ended. Apart from our caravan's tracks not the smallest imprint could be seen on the bare undulating dunes and wind-swept sand ridges. In this place apparently untouched by life only the wind was "alive." Raging and whirling far and wide, it threw up pillars of sand more than fifty metres high.

We trekked ten days and more across the sands before there loomed ahead of us a dark forest of Tarim poplars which have grown for centuries in the heart of the desert. We had reached our destination.

None of our team had been here before, although I had flown over on an aerial survey. From the air this region was a beautiful sight. The Tarim surged east throwing up golden waves, its banks five to ten kilometres wide stretching like green corridors through the yellow sand for several hundred kilometres. And these corridors verdant with trees were fringed with meadows full of tamarisks in bloom or wild hemp. Have you ever seen hemp flowers? They are like pink bells.

That was the view from the air. But it looked very different when we set foot in the forest. I have climbed the Tianshan Mountains, whose noble firs rise sheer from steep cliffs and make you hold your breath for admiration; I have crossed the Altai too, whose magnificent pines seem to pierce the clouds and be mantled with rosy mist. How paltry these Tarim poplars were by contrast. And the ground between them, eroded by wind, had sand drifts into which you sank knee-deep. Entering that dark, stifling forest was like falling into a limekiln. Twisted, stunted trees grew sideways like an octopus thrusting out its tentacles. Branches interlaced like tangled hair. Some dead trees still stood stiff and rigid as corpses, while others were rotting away. Even the saplings were blighted and pathetic with their half-

withered branches and jaundiced leaves, fresh shoots side by side with decay.

Our job was to find one of the local people to act as our guide and provide us with information about the river-bed, the water resources and the weather conditions.

To this end we followed the largest track through the poplars. The forest was criss-crossed with tracks. So much the better. That meant that plenty of people and cattle lived there and gave the lie to the report that only a few dozen nomads could be found in the Tarim's upper reaches. I took the precaution, however, of arranging signals so that we could keep in close touch and of keeping the camels in a line, as it would have been all too easy to lose the way.

After a kilometre or so the man in front came back to announce that the track had ended abruptly in a thicket. Climbing one of the highest trees to spy out the land, I saw a tangle of tamarisk, black-thorn and wild dates, too dense for a breath of wind to penetrate. The confounded track had led to a dead end.

"Double back," I said. "We'll find another way."

But three times the same thing happened. Each track ended in a thicket. We felt trapped in a maze of thorns and scrub and went on rather more tensely and warily.

"These don't look like man-made tracks, team leader," remarked Abdulla.

He was right, of course. Paths trodden out by men lead to homes or places of work instead of vanishing like ghosts into a thicket. I asked our most experienced trackers to look out for footprints, dung, wool or any other clue as to what trails these were.

It didn't take long to clear up the mystery. These tracks in every direction had been made by wild boars, antelopes, deer, giant lizards and hares. One, however, showed some most peculiar footprints the same size and distance apart as those of a man. But if a man walked barefoot his toe marks would be visible; if in shoes, the soles would leave their mark. And these imprints were made by something olive-shaped, fringed by long hair. What creature could have made them? Did the bear-man of old legends really exist?

We had obviously strayed into an uninhabited primeval forest, a labyrinth of wild beasts. A warning signal flashed through my mind: Look out! I wasn't worrying about the surveyors who were old hands at field work, but our doctor was going to be a problem. He had just graduated from medical college and wore glasses, being short-sighted. So far he had never roughed it. Yet instead of bringing a simple first-aid kit as I'd advised, he'd filled a whole pack with scissors, forceps, bottles, tins and medicines of every kind. Preposterous! Our team had no invalids. But when I protested he argued back at great length until I finally let him bring the lot. After all, you have to go easy with a novice. He was said to be a competent doctor, but as he didn't know the first thing about surveying I assigned someone to help teach him the rudiments of our job.

At dusk we lit a fire and made camp. But a whole host of problems kept us awake. Where could we find a guide, provisions and water? We'd had access to water in the desert so long as we followed the Hotien river-bed, as there were water-holes there from the flood season. In the forest, however, we found neither pool nor spring and were dependent on our water-skins.

Towards midnight all hell broke loose. It was enough to make your hair stand on end. From the northwest came what sounded like the bellowing of thousands of wild beasts or the thunder of the Tarim surging towards us. Yet in spite of the deafening uproar all around, not a leaf stirred, neither did the camp fire flicker.

We realized quickly enough that this pandemonium was caused by the wind, an extraordinary wind. Instead of springing up gently and gaining in strength as it approached, it assailed you without any warning. One second all was still. The next, all the trees around were flailing wildly and the sand was lashing them with an ear-splitting din. Gnarled branches and dead wood rained down like hail. Men can rise to an emergency but our panic-stricken camels started howling, and as soon as one was struck by a branch they stampeded. That tore it. Our walkie-talkie was kicked over, a pack upset and one of our precious water-skins ripped open. At this rate we'd soon be done for.

In the rush to catch the camels I forgot Doc. It wasn't until the next morning, when all the camels had been brought back, that we discovered he was missing. In his efforts to retrieve his medical supplies he had lost his way.

Obviously we must rescue him without delay. He could die of thirst in a couple of days in the forest.

Doc's tracks had been covered up by sand. We searched for two days without a sign of him. On the morning of the third day we discovered clothes he had discarded, and then it didn't take Abdulla long to find his trail.

"Look, team leader," he called to me, catching his breath. "What do you make of that?"

Doc's trail was marked with blood. But where the blood began his footprints ended and something heavy had been dragged through the dust. A lump came into my throat. I was sure Doc was done for, carried off by some wild beast. I kept these fears to myself, of course, as I hurriedly led the way forward.

After skirting a thicket we found him lying unconscious, his left foot gashed by a steel trap. He had made that trail in the dust by crawling along. Luckily the trap hadn't broken any bones. We soon managed to bring him round.

But what was a trap doing in this primeval forest? After careful examination Abdulla told us it was the sort the Uighurs use to trap hares. That raised my spirits, proving as it did that someone lived in the forest.

With this clue to guide us, we found fresh footprints nearby. Unfortunately they were the same olive-shaped imprints made by something fringed with long hair. But along their trail we discovered two more traps which none but a man could have set.

As we halted by the third trap to talk things over we heard steps in the forest. We took cover and listened intently.

The steps drew nearer and soon a man appeared. We were staggered by his appearance. He was an old greybeard with long unkempt hair and a swarthy, grimy face, dressed in a fearfully tattered sheepskin cape and sheepskin trousers in slightly better condition. I looked carefully at his feet and saw a pair of sheepskin moccasins like im-



provided bandages. That cleared up the mystery of those olive-shaped footprints.

He spotted us almost at once. "Adam?" he cried. "Khitai!" The next instant he had vanished into the forest.

I can't tell you how pleased we were. Know why? He was an old Uighur. Adam means "man" in their language, and Khitai "the

Han people." There was nothing astonishing about his running away from Hans, because the people of the Tarim Basin were out of touch with developments outside.

II

That was the old hunter I mentioned, Ibrahim Bawdin. We never discovered just how old he was. According to him, he was born when the wild date flowered, married when the wild date flowered, and had his first son when the wild date flowered. But since the wild date flowers every year, that didn't help.... I put him down as eighty at least, because the elderly woman living with him was his widowed daughter-in-law. And if she were already old, he must be even older.

The old fellow was as tough as whipcord, and none of his teeth was missing. His one ailment was inflammation of the eyes.

He was no hermit living there by choice. His grandfather had been a peasant in Aksu who was so ground down by the *bai** that he ran away with his grandson to this wild forest with all his meagre possessions — two rugs, a water-gourd, a pan and eight traps. And all Bawdin had acquired beyond this when we met him was a flock of fifteen sheep, which I gathered he kept to clothe his family. For when his daughter-in-law patched a tattered sheepskin she pulled a handful of wool out of a fleece and twisted it into thread, as if the sheep were her ready-made work basket.

They lived in a hut built of poplars daubed with mud which was already crumbling from the walls. This was home for Bawdin's daughter-in-law and her child while he roamed from place to place hunting.

He led the nomadic existence of a hunter, spending the night wherever he happened to be. Today he had found a spot sheltered from the wind by a clump of tamarisks, made himself a bed of dried leaves, and set up his eight traps not far from this base. There are no wolves in the Tarim forest, which no doubt accounts for the fact that it

*A landlord or rich man.

teems with hares and this primitive method of catching them was successful. When the hares in one part of the forest learned to avoid his traps, he simply moved on.

The ground outside their hut was littered with bones and skins like a foxes' burrow. It was evident that hares were their staple food.

"Can you catch hares every day?" I asked.

"It depends on Huda."* In other words, on chance.

Asked what he ate otherwise, he reeled off a list of names like "karikat" and "kongurat tikan" which poor Abdulla couldn't translate, never having heard of them.

This season when wild plants were sprouting and hares didn't keep to their winter runs was a hungry time for the old hunter's family. I gave him some brick tea and a bag of flour and asked permission to camp near his hut. He agreed with obvious reluctance. And presently he brought us half his own provisions, not wanting to be in our debt.

The bulk of what he brought consisted of wild dates and various seeds which he called "karikat" and "kongurat tikan." In a word, all seeds of wild plants. But although they lived so wretchedly the old man refused to accept any more gifts from us.

He was abnormally taciturn and reserved, wouldn't talk if he could help it, and wouldn't let anyone into his hut. We kept hearing his daughter-in-law crying inside but didn't know what was the matter. He kept a fierce dog with red, inflamed eyes which lay quietly at their door but bared its teeth and barked furiously if anyone went near.

Abdulla was the only one of us able to exchange a few words with the old hunter. But all his questions about the Tarim Basin received an identical answer: "I don't know." The next day Abdulla came in dismay to report that the hunter was packing up as if to move. It had been hard enough finding one of the local people and we desperately needed a guide and information. If he left we'd have to start all over again. I hurried over with Abdulla and finally prevailed on Bawdin to stay, on condition that we camped further away from his hut.

*Allah.

After two days' rest Doc was up and about again. As I was parleying with the old hunter he hobbled past hoping to get a light from their stove, for we'd lost so many matches when the camels stampeded that I'd had to forbid their use for lighting cigarettes. As he neared the door the dog sprang at him with a growl. Doc fell over in fright, and I fancied the old hunter smiled.

Desperate for a light, Doc took off his glasses and held them over a handful of dry leaves under the sun. After a while the leaves caught fire. The old hunter stared as if this were magic while Abdulla explained, "This man with glasses is our *babchi*, our medicine-man." At once the old man's face lit up and he eyed Doc with respect.

The next day the old hunter came with his dog to ask for our *babchi*'s help. He offered him two sheep if the *babchi* would consent to chant some incantations.

Here I should explain that apart from enjoying good health old Bawdin had been unlucky all his life. All his twelve children had been "called back to Huda." His daughter-in-law, widowed a few years previously, had given him twelve grandchildren but eleven of these had also been "called back to Huda," leaving only the youngest, Beniskan, a girl of twelve. Now she was fearfully ill, and this was why her mother had been crying.

Our *babchi* accompanied Bawdin to a clump of trees where the girl lay in a hammock suspended from a branch by sheepskin thongs. Bawdin set this hammock spinning round. The little girl, at her last gasp, whimpered feebly.

This was one of the ways a *babchi* cured the sick. He spun the hammock till the patient was dizzy and then let it down, demanding, "What spirit are you? Own up. What spirit?" If the patient remained silent he threatened him with a knife, insisting on knowing what evil spirit had taken possession of him. For then the *babchi* could chant incantations.

There were no doctors in the desolate Tarim Basin, not even a *babchi*. All the old hunter could do was to imitate a *babchi*'s methods. Tears running down his cheeks, he spun the hammock and threatened his grand-daughter with a knife. But since he knew no incantations, he had to ask help from our bespectacled Han *babchi*.

Our *babchi* saw that the girl had acute pneumonia. He did what was right, and did it tactfully. He told Bawdin it was too late for incantations. The only way to save the child was by taking her into his tent. We managed to obtain the old hunter's consent.

You can imagine how the old man loved his one surviving grandchild. He watched for three days and three nights outside that tent. As we wouldn't let him in, he had no idea that Doc was giving Beniskan injections. Not until she was able to call "Grandad!" did he go back to his hut to sleep.

I can tell you I was glad now that Doc had brought all that medicine, for without it he could never have saved the child. Doc had worked hard too, not sleeping properly until she was out of danger. After that I never objected however much equipment he loaded on to his camel. It was reassuring to know that we had a responsible, first-rate doctor in our team.

III

In the Tarim forests were birds called "*akulos*" which had black breasts and white tails. The day Beniskan was well enough to go home whole flocks of *akulos* circled overhead, crying shrilly like waterfowl startled from the reeds in a lake. Bawdin rushed into our tent first thing the next morning and urged us to hurry to his *badadung*. "The *akulos* were crying before it was light," he panted. "There's no time to be lost. Come, quick!"

Once more the old fellow had us mystified. I knew *akulos* were very highly regarded. According to a folk story, Huda's chief minister was Paykambar and once, when his beard caught fire, the magpies flew round asking all the birds to put the flame out. Not one of the waterfowl responded, but the *akulos* carried water in their beaks and put out the fire. That was how their breast plumage, which was singed, turned black. I was willing to respect these intrepid birds but couldn't see why we should move on their account. Was some local custom involved?

Evidently not. Bawdin hastily packed his belongings, rounded up his sheep and led us to his *badadung*.

This was a little hill with a pole planted on top. There was reason for that pole, as you shall hear.

A *badadung* is a place of refuge from flood. Since this whole region is dotted with hummocks and sand dunes, it is hard to spot the safest height from ten *li* or more away unless you mark it. And there is no time to lose. As it was we cut it very fine. We had barely set out when the Tarim River flooded and came racing after us, inundating the forest.

The Tarim rises incredibly fast. The whole bank seemed to give way and white-capped waves swept through the forest. We gasped for dismay when we gazed down from our height. All was dark leaping foam and muddy scum as the turbulent river raced on, swirling madly. Huge sections of the sandy bank had caved in, carrying sturdy poplars with them, and it was terrifying to watch those trees spinning round like paper boats. If Bawdin hadn't taken us to his *badadung*, even if we'd climbed the trees the flood would have caught us.

The truth about *akulos* is not that they put out fires but that they predict a flood. The old hunter told us that when they wheeled overhead, crying, it meant the Tarim was in spate. If they set up a clamour before dawn you must run for your life — the torrent was racing towards you.

At last Bawdin was letting us into the Tarim's secrets. I promptly got out my notebook and jotted down this vital information before going on to ask him other questions.

The old man was in good spirits that day. He told me quite a number of useful facts. For instance, if you lose your way in the desert you can tell the direction from the wild pigeons' flight. In the forest you can examine the tamarisks most of whose roots grow towards the east. A good deal can be learned from the swallows too. If they flock to the south bank, or the north, it means a wind will spring up there.

We were eager to explore both banks as soon as possible. According to all the records the Tarim River constantly changes course. Part of its south bank may end up on the north, and vice versa. During the last century it has carved out a new course four times, to say nothing of countless smaller deviations, and because the river-bed

shifts so erratically it is very hard to farm there. You may sow hundreds of thousands of *mon* with cotton one spring, and have the whole crop washed away in summer. It was therefore essential for us to learn the laws governing the capricious river.

Of course, these laws aren't easy to work out. We approached the subject from many different angles, but all Bawdin could tell us about was the places where he had lived.

There were a good many of these and to each he had given a descriptive name. Once, for instance, he loosened a small plot of land with a ram's horn and sowed several *mon* with musk-melon, so that became Musk-melon Farm. Elsewhere he sowed some seeds which failed to sprout, and that place was called the Waste Land. Then there were Green Creek, Blue Lagoon, Snake Pit and Giant Lizard Wood. All in all, he had lived in well over thirty places.

I drew a line to represent the river, but Bawdin didn't catch on. Then I dug a small ditch with my mattock, filled it with water and told him this was the Tarim. Which side had his homes been on?

Now he caught on and laughed heartily. He took my mattock and handled it lovingly, reluctant to put it down.

"I had one of these once," he said. His grandfather had taken one when they ran away to live on a plain called Arik Tokrak. He spread his arms to indicate its great size. "If you put a pheasant egg on the ground, you could see it hatch out from ten *li* away." He waxed quite eloquent about Arik Tokrak where his grandfather had sown a plot with sesame which had to be cut with a mattock.

"Why did you leave if it was such a good place?"

Sighing, Bawdin breached the bank of our model Tarim River so that all the water flowed out and disappeared quickly in the sand.

Then we gathered that the river had changed its course and that Arik Tokrak, enchanting as some magic island, had become an uninhabitable waste.

After a long conversation it became clear that about half the thirty-odd places where he had lived had been south of the present river channel, half of them north. The saying, "Thirty years the river flows east, thirty years west," was the absolute truth to Bawdin.

We were doubly lucky that day. Half of Bawdin's traps caught hares, which Beniskan brought back and on her grandfather's instructions gave in token of thanks to our *babchi* with the magic glasses. That evening we cooked a delicious stew over our camp-fire and invited the hunter's family to share it. He kept smacking his lips in amazement that hares could taste so good. So when we offered him spirits he didn't refuse, in fact he proved quite a drinker. Even when tipsy he wanted more to drink.

I asked him to guide us to Arik Tokrak and all the other places where he had lived. But for some reason his face darkened, he glowered at me from bloodshot eyes and angrily muttered something which Abdulla translated as, "You ... Merket ... hunting for treasure?"

We could make no sense out of this and decided the old man was drunk. I felt that patience was called for and didn't insist.

We slept extra soundly after that excellent meal. But it's no good for a surveyor in the field to sleep too soundly. In fact, it's a bad thing.

When we rose the next morning Bawdin's whole family had gone.

He had left in too much of a hurry to take his eight traps which were in our tent, nor had he rounded up the sheep for fear perhaps that the noise would waken us. Judging by their tracks, he had staggered off with Beniskan sleeping in his arms, again for fear of disturbing us no doubt.

We couldn't account for the old hunter's behaviour. He'd been so cheerful and talkative the day before. After eating and drinking with us that evening, what possessed him to decamp in the middle of the night without so much as a word?

We tracked them with growing misgivings. They'd headed for the Taklamakan Desert, but they couldn't hope to survive there without food and water. Abdulla was sure that Bawdin knew what he was doing and had gone that way to throw us off the scent, intending later to double back to the forest. For some reason he was on his guard against us. Perhaps some casual remark of ours had alarmed him.

Sure enough, on a sizable sand-hill we found a place where the old man had paced up and down calculating the direction from the stars,

after which he had turned north and made a bee-line for the forest. We admired his ability to find the way so accurately in the dark, but his precipitate flight still puzzled us. We hurried in pursuit, sliding down the hill instead of walking down.

Everything indicated that the old hunter had set off at midnight, which gave him a twenty kilometres' start. Impossible to say whether he was heading for Musk-melon Farm or the Waste Land. He might still be pushing on.

We didn't see how his family was to survive without the eight traps and fifteen sheep on which they depended completely. Doc was even more worried than the rest of us, because his patient was just recovering and should still be taking medicine.

We agreed to let Abdulla lead a search party, taking the traps and sheep to return to Bawdin and travelling day and night to overtake him as soon as possible. Find him they must, however far he had gone. Doc asked permission to go with Abdulla, and this time I agreed without any hesitation.

IV

There is a legend in the Tarim Basin that in the heart of the Taklamakan Desert, beyond the reach of even the *akulos*, stands the fabulous city of Merket, walled with jade, its houses built of gold, and its streets paved with silver. Many trees grow in that city, but instead of fruit they bear great clusters of rubies, any one of which is worth 50,000 sheep, 10,000 oxen, or a thousand thoroughbred horses. To gain possession of these jewels is not difficult either: one need only climb seven times seven sand-hills before sunrise, ford seven times seven broad rivers before sunset, and on a dark, moonless night shoot out the eyes of seven times seven giant lizards. Then the golden gates of Merket will swing open and the treasure seeker can climb any tree of his choice and take whole handfuls of rubies, enough to fill all the sacks he can carry away. There is one condition, though. If the treasure seeker's heart is impure and he cannot chant the Koran seven times seven times, the golden gates of the city will not open again and he will be trapped inside.

The end of this legend is something of an anti-climax. Many bold souls set off for Merket to seek their fortune, but not one of them succeeded in crossing seven times seven sand-hills before sunrise. By the time they repented of their rashness the sun was up, and they were scorched to death on the burning sand. Thus no one has ever seen those trees laden with rubies.

I fully believe that conclusion, for of course there are no trees in the world that bear rubies. It is true, though, that a traveller has journeyed to Merket, returning not with rubies but an ancient saddle, a few earthen bowls, wooden tablets, weapons, old coins and mouldering lengths of silk. Since there was no market for such things, the unlucky treasure seeker threw them away. But towards the end of the Ching dynasty a foreign "explorer" penetrated to the Tarim Basin to map the region and, hearing of these valuable antiques, concluded that Merket was a sand-buried city many centuries old. Accordingly he bribed the governor of Aksu to let him carry out excavations, knowing that these relics shipped to museums abroad would realize a thousand times as much as his bribe had cost. The governor ordered his runners to conscript coolies and camels to organize a caravan for the foreigner. They were unable to find a guide, however.

At last the governor learned that in the Tarim forest lived a man who had made the journey to Merket. This man, Bawdin's grandfather, was summoned to Aksu. Bawdin himself was just a boy at the time.

"If they want to roast, let them. I'm not going with them," said Bawdin's grandfather who had nearly lost his life in a search for the treasure of Merket. That same night he and his grandson ran away. For it was no joke crossing the Taklamakan Desert and although he'd come through alive once he mightn't be so lucky a second time. They were caught and dragged back, however, and then the old man swore, "I'll guide you to Huda. You won't set eyes on Merket."

This put the foreigner on his guard. If the old fellow really led them astray in the desert it would be dangerous. He made the runners bind the guide's grandson and take him along — the old man would never lead the boy to his death.

It was the time when the wild dates flower. By day the desert was hot enough to roast a sheep, but the wind at night could freeze the blood in your veins. Worst of all they could find no water, and the foreign "explorer" only gave the Chinese coolies a cupful of water a day, so that half of them died. But the others succeeded in reclaiming the old city of Merket from the desert sand.

The camels were loaded with case after case of relics. But on their way back a storm sprang up and when the wind died down and the pall of dust settled the foreigner and foreman had disappeared with the whole string of camels. They had taken the last water-skin too, abandoning a dozen coolies to their fate.

All but one of the coolies who had excavated Merket died. The only survivor was Bawdin, who never forgot the sight of the men clawing at their chests and throats in an agony of thirst. His grandfather, a seasoned old hunter, managed to struggle on for a stage with him until they found an old camel left to die by a dune. He killed the camel, opened its stomach and gave the liquid retained there to his grandson to enable him to press on westwards. For if he could reach Yarbat he would be safe. His grandfather's dying advice to him was, "If you hear the word 'guide' again, lad, run for it!"

My use of this word accounted for Bawdin's flight.

When our search party found him he had already gone without food for two days. The old man shed tears at sight of the traps and sheep.

After May the Tarim Basin bursts into bloom. Even the thickets are a mass of flowers. This is no exaggeration. You feast your eyes on a profusion of colours: the vermilion, cream, pink and snow-white of flowering tamarisks, wild dates, wild hemp and bell-thorn. The intoxicating fragrance of the wild dates scents the air for a thousand *li* around. The Tarim Basin is all bird-song and blossom.

The old hunter had undergone as swift a transformation as the forest and was on the best of terms with us now. He assured Abdulla, "A hare knows better than to trust a wolf, and men have eyes to recognize the sun." For all his lack of education he was shrewd.

And once he saw the right course he followed it. After this he never left us again.

Old Bawdin took us to Musk-melon Farm, the Waste Land, Blue Lagoon, Snake Pit and all his former haunts on the north bank. We plunged deeper and deeper into the vast forest, marvelling at its incredible loveliness. But surveyors can't afford to be dazzled by natural beauty. We had to ask ourselves why no people had settled here for a thousand years and more when the Tarim Basin was so beautiful. Poor communications were no answer since men have penetrated to many places where communications are very difficult, and this was only seven days' journey from the nearest farm. There must be another reason.

We decided to go to the south bank to make a more thorough survey of the unpredictable Tarim. For according to Bawdin it always shifted north, and the reason for this could only be found on the south bank. In any case, there were great tracts of desert there waiting to be explored.

When the Tarim is in flood it looks impossible to cross that two-*li* waste of swirling waves. Once Bawdin knew what we meant to do he cold-shouldered us for two days. He had a curious aversion to our red and white offset poles and now took to casting very black looks at these. He told Abdulla bluntly, "I'll only take you if you burn those things."

We couldn't work without the poles, yet Abdulla couldn't get to the bottom of the old man's aversion to them. Finally we promised to leave all but two on the north bank and take these tightly bundled up in cloth. This concession and our obvious earnestness won the old hunter round.

When this agreement had been reached Bawdin led us to Green Creek, where to our pleased surprise we found he had hidden a canoe. It was just like a picture in the history books — a small boat hollowed out of a poplar trunk. Green Creek became our ferry and headquarters, and Bawdin's family moved here too.

Although we now had a boat, crossing the river was a hair-raising experience. The swift-flowing, swirling Tarim tossed our frail craft up and down like a cork and huge waves threatened to swamp the



low prow. Perched in that tub I broke out in a cold sweat. And when it came to Doc's turn he was so nervous that he rocked the boat and upset it. If not for Bawdin we should have seen the last of our *babchi*.

We owed not only the boat but our food to Bawdin. For wherever we camped he set traps and caught hares for us. This obviously gave

him considerable satisfaction as good-hearted people like to benefit others, and this old hunter far from civilization was no exception.

We made our way up the south bank through the forest to the desert, crossing several of the Tarim's old courses where the tall poplars on either side had withered from lack of water. Sand was blowing through the dead trees and swirling in white waves along the dried river-bed. The wind lashed the tangle of arid boughs on the sand dunes. Never had we seen such utter desolation.

One day on a relatively level plain we found traces of farming; and the further we went the more of these there were, including what had obviously been canals.

Bawdin strode ahead before we could question him to the foot of a ruined wall. "Yarbat," he told us, halting. "This is Yarbat."

That staggered us. For Yarbat was where Bawdin's grandfather had urged him to fly, where Bawdin had spent several years and where he had married. Opened up by thousands of colonists during the Ching dynasty, it should have been full of houses and roads thronged with people. How was it that nothing but ruins remained?

Bawdin ignored this question and climbed on to the crumbling wall to stare eastwards in silence. We knew he was gazing across the yellow sand towards the ancient city of Merket, his heart filled with the old hate and bitterness. Presently he led us slowly up a sandy mound where it seemed trees had once grown.

On closer inspection we saw these were not trees but poles planted there by men. Wind-borne sand had rubbed them as clean as if washed with water. We realized that this was a *mazar* or graveyard, for each year when the Uighurs sweep their ancestors' tombs and sacrifice to them they hang sheep's heads or bones on tall poles there, until as the years go by the place resembles a copse of withered trees. Although Bawdin had been unable to bring back his grandfather's corpse, he had made this graveyard facing Merket and here he had later buried his wife and most of his children.

"Those called back by Huda should lie in a place free from sorrow. This *mazar* was different before," said Bawdin, distressed by the graveyard's desolation. He told us it had once been a beauty spot overlooking green woods through which ran the golden Tarim bordered by lush crops. Now the graveyard had changed out of all recognition and Yarbat's fair fields and woods had run to waste.

The old city of Merket, Yarbat which had only recently been abandoned, as well as other towns and villages now swallowed up by the desert, all testified to the fact that men had come to settle in the Tarim Basin, but instead of conquering it they were conquered by it. Bawdin was a witness to the previous conquest of men by the Tarim River. He told us how Yarbat with its thousand souls had been reduced to ruin.

South of Yarbat the Tarim flowed through a narrow channel between high sand ridges. To the west was pastureland. One year drought withered the grass and the shepherds breached one bank to water their meadows. The river widened this gap so rapidly that in less than a day the whole Tarim was pouring that way — it had changed its course again. Yarbat which had formerly stood on the bank of the river was now a good hundred *li* away from it. The people were ruined. Soon the parched trees died.

It sounds almost incredible that a few strokes with a pick should make a mighty river change its course. But so it had happened. We studied the old river-bed and the gradient of the land, investigated the sediment in the bed and estimated its speed of accumulation. It became clear that this desert river carried and deposited so much sand that from time to time its bed grew higher than the surrounding land and it had to carve out another course.

When Bawdin saw we were stopping in Yarbat he went off to trap hares. We were sure there could be none in that grassless district, but to our surprise he made an extra big bag, catching a hare in almost every trap. This was decidedly odd. One day Abdulla and I accompanied him and found a swamp twenty *li* and more to the north. When the Tarim was in spate this swamp became moist and wild plants sprang up in profusion. At once I forgot all about catching hares. You see, three sides of this swamp were high sand-hills like a huge retaining wall, while to the west stretched a good 80,000 *mou* of level land. Since this swamp was filled with water when the Tarim was in spate, if we cut a canal and led the flood water there we should have a natural reservoir. By retaining the flood water and regulating its outflow, we could gradually stop the silting up of the channel which made the river change its course so often.

The Tarim throughout history had conquered men. For the first time in history men were out to conquer the Tarim. To do this we had to control this "runaway" river, and finding an ideal site for a reservoir was equivalent to finding reins to rein in a horse.

Our spirits soaring, we promptly moved all our men and equipment to the swamp and started surveying. Bawdin's face clouded over again when we produced our poles, but instead of enforcing any taboo he glumly squatted down to watch us. That evening he told Abdulla:

"If none of you are afraid, neither am I. Let's move on. You'll find no treasure here." Three days' journey southward would take us to Merket, he said, and we must carry plenty of water.

At first I couldn't make any sense of this. Then it emerged that Bawdin hated surveying poles because the foreign "explorer" had taken red and white poles like ours to Merket, no doubt to plot maps. Ours had convinced the old hunter that we were treasure seekers too,

for all our talk about building up state farms. When I knew the truth I was very touched by his loyalty. For you know, to Bawdin treasure-hunting meant almost certain death — he'd nearly lost his life in the desert once already. But during our brief time together he'd come to trust us so much that he was willing to risk his life to guide us. He'd decided to take us to Yarbat first, then to Merket.

I immediately got Abdulla to tell him that we were not looking for treasure but were out to build socialism.

I had to laugh at myself afterwards for imagining that a man brought up in a primitive forest could understand the meaning of socialism.

V

Finally, thanks to the old hunter, we carried back a good deal of useful information from this reconnaissance survey. Then we had to move elsewhere while other surveying teams went to work there. In 1958, the year for the beginning of our Big Leap Forward in socialist construction, we read in the newspapers of the stupendous changes in the Tarim Basin.

These reports must have made a deep impression on all who read them. As for us, we were fired even in our dreams by the transformation of the Tarim Basin. After all, we'd drawn up the blueprints for reclaiming the desert, and your heart beats faster when you hear that a dot you drew on a map has become a new village, that Green Creek where you crossed the river in a canoe has become an important centre of communications between the farms on both banks and a flourishing market town. News like that makes you too excited to sleep.

My thoughts kept turning to Bawdin whom we hadn't seen for over four years. When he saw us off he hadn't said much, just laid his hands on our heads to wish us good luck and urged us, "Mind you come back to see me."

With tears in our eyes we had promised that we would. But surveyors are like the wild geese who roam the whole land, and not one of us had managed to keep his promise.

Whenever we met anyone from the Tarim Basin we asked after Bawdin, and the news of him was cheering. People said he had become ruddier and more energetic and had caught many young deer for the farm, some of whom were already growing antlers. From others we heard that Bawdin was the best adviser to the construction corps now building state farms there. He it was who told the soldiers where to find licorice and hemp, the best way to catch fish, the safest way to cross a river when the ice was thin. Yet others informed us that Bawdin was not so much the construction corps' adviser as Chief of Staff Lu's adviser. If he stepped out of doors, the chief of staff's jeep came to meet him. Maybe this was exaggerated, but it had some basis in fact. Chief of Staff Lu was in charge of the unit opening up the Tarim Basin, and just before we left he'd asked me to introduce him to Bawdin.

Still all these reports, convincing as they were, by no means satisfied us. We wanted to know just how the old hunter had changed in the course of the transformation of the Tarim Basin.

That July, Abdulla and I had occasion to visit the big Tarim Reservoir. That gave me a chance to look up our old friend.

Our car bowled along the broad level Aksu-Tarim Highway at forty kilometres an hour. In three hours we reached Alal (Green Creek), the first new town by the Tarim. What impressed us most was not the shops, restaurants, banks or post-office which you find wherever an army construction corps goes. Nor was it the tall buildings, good roads, factories and schools, which are the same on other army farms. No, what impressed us most was the desert poplars, so ugly when we first visited the region. Then the dunes had been covered with old wizened, stunted trees and pitiful parched saplings more dead than alive. But now the century-old trees which had seemed dead had been watered, tended and brought to life again. They cast a green shade over the new desert town. The whole world can surely have known few such transformations. And the change in these poplars testified to what had been done for the Tarim.

Alal was changed out of recognition. Lighters and launches shipping tractors were moored by Green Creek Jetty, and we could not find the spot where the canoe had ferried us across. Where

scrub and brushwood had grown were now neat level fields, forest belts, green irrigation canals and creamy tree-shaded houses.

We'd anticipated some difficulty in finding the old hunter who lived off the forest. It proved quite simple, however. When the attendant in our hostel heard what we wanted he asked a schoolboy wearing a red scarf to show us the way.

"Grandad Bawdin may not be at home," said the boy. "He spends most of his time outside."

He led us to a new house and, sure enough, Bawdin was out. So were Beniskan and her mother. But finding the door unlocked we went in and made ourselves at home.

Judging by the furnishing of the rooms, the life of Bawdin's family had changed out of recognition too. The beds were spread with gay rugs and quilts and a thermos flask stood on the table. Most astonishing of all was a brand-new sewing-machine by the window, and a bicycle with a motor. Maybe they had a lodger to account for these things.

A girl approached, singing, and I assumed she was a visitor from the state farm as she was singing *The East Is Red* in Chinese. But she was wearing a smart pink Uighur dress, a dark green velvet bodice, a gay cap beaded with multicoloured pearls, and the leather boots so popular in that region. She had slender, jet-black eyebrows, lovely, brilliant eyes and plump rosy cheeks. She asked us in fluent Chinese, "Whom did you want to see?"

When we explained the reason for our visit she skipped for excitement and cried, "You're Team Leader Chung, the chief of the surveying team. Now I recognize you."

So she was Beniskan. She had certainly changed. You could hardly blame me for not knowing her in that smart get-up, speaking Chinese so well. She pouted when she heard Doc hadn't come.

"Why didn't you drop a line to say you were coming?" she asked. "I can read now, I'm in the fourth form. Team leader, grandad caught a young deer for your team but you never came, and now it's the size of a donkey."

We learned from Beniskan's chatter that the family was comfortably off, thanks to the old hunter's hard work. He seldom trapped hares

now, having better things to eat. His main job was catching young deer, whose antlers fetched a good price for the farm.

"My grandad still can't reckon in terms of money. He likes anything that moves. He bartered one deer for a bicycle, another for a sewing-machine. And another for this." She produced a mechanical monkey on a stick. "He refused to take any change."

Chuckling we asked, "And what does your grandad like best?"

"My grandad likes people best. If not for the men who came to the Tarim, he says, we'd have eaten a deer in a couple of meals and had nothing left to show for it."

Yes, if not for the construction corps this would still have been an uninhabited waste. The shrewd old hunter had seen to the heart of the matter.

Beniskan shyly produced a dress she was making. "Can you use a sewing-machine?" she asked. "Will you teach me?"

I had to admit my fingers were too clumsy to use a sewing-machine. I offered to teach her to ride a bicycle, though. She shot me a side-long glance as if to convey that she'd learned that long ago. But not wanting to embarrass me she explained rather diffidently, "My grandad wants me to learn all I can from the Hans, making clothes and cooking too. He says your surveying team had a better way of cooking hares than ours. All I've learned so far is to scramble eggs and fry pancakes. I'll make you some."

She fetched her mother and the two of them set to work to entertain us. Her mother, who had formerly been so silent, seemed twenty years younger now. For the first time she spoke to me in halting Chinese, "Now ... we ... live ... well."

Our meal of scrambled eggs and pancakes was interrupted by hooting from the Tarim River. Beniskan hastily put down her bowl and chopsticks and rushed out, crying, "Grandad!"

The lighter Victory No. 2 whistled as if to confirm: Yes, your grandad is here.

I strained my eyes towards the white-haired old man on the deck. It was Bawdin, a double-barrelled gun in his hands, his face beaming with a broad smile. He was dressed in traditional Uighur style with



high boots. His dog who knew us well gave one joyful yelp and then, still holding a pheasant it had caught, jumped into the water and swam rapidly to the shore.

I hadn't expected to need to be shown around but Bawdin insisted on acting as our guide, either for the sake of our company or because he really thought we might lose our way. Or perhaps for neither reason. He laid particular stress on the word "guide," as if what had formerly been taboo was now the greatest source of pride to him.

We drove out from Alal through what seemed boundless green fields. No sign now of the tangled thickets we had known before, the undulating sand dunes, the poplars carried off by the flood or the labyrinth of wild beasts. We saw nothing but a vast green carpet stretching peacefully to the blue sky at the horizon.

Bawdin screwed up his eyes in the satisfied smile of a host displaying some treasure to his guests and kept up a running commentary all the way. The Waste Land had become a white-capped green sea of cotton. The once fearful Snake Pit was a mass of water-melons the size of basins and musk-melons, cabbages and tomatoes. Giant Lizard Wood was swarming with white leghorns.

We listened with the greatest satisfaction as we drove across the huge plain. And Bawdin urged us to alight when we reached the Tarim's second hospital in Happiness Town.

Taking Beniskan's hand he walked up to a large tree, patted its trunk affectionately and then stroked his grand-daughter's hair. For a long time he said nothing. At last with tears in his eyes he asked:

"Remember this place, team leader?"

I had to confess I didn't, surprised by his distress after he had been so cheerful on the road.

Bawdin put on a show of spinning something round and said, "*Babchi, babchi.*"

That brought it all back to me. When little Beniskan was at her last gasp, this was where the old hunter had tried the *babchi's* method of suspending her in a hammock from a tree and spinning her around. Now a sizable hospital stood in front of the tree. Was it a coincidence or a deliberate reminder?

Some things were certainly not coincidences. In Bawdin's old sheep-fold, for instance, now stood the tall Tarim Agricultural College. The thicket where Doc had been caught in a trap was site of the Agricultural Research Institute. When I asked what had become of the *hadadung* where the pole was planted Beniskan told me, "There are two huge poles planted there now, with a weather vane spinning on top. It's our meteorological station."

Bawdin pointed to the cross roads and called to the driver, "To Yarbat."

We drove on towards a canal whose dike was a broad straight road. I knew without being told that this was the celebrated Tarim Canal which led to our destination, the reservoir.

The car sped on until our way was blocked by a huge embankment dozens of *li* in width. We had reached the Tarim Reservoir.

Once again Bawdin strode off ahead of us, going faster and faster in the grip of some powerful emotion. Instead of taking us to a graveyard, however, he led us to the control house.

We climbed the control tower and looked down over the huge lake held back by the dam. Water stretched to the horizon. In the old days the desert wind had kept a pall of dust hanging in the air here. Now the huge waves on the blue lake made it resemble a sea. Just below us the vast torrent flowing out through the sluices thundered down like a cataract into the new Tarim River to feed the canals large and small on every side and irrigate the vast plain.

Gazing at this sea in the desert, Bawdin turned solemnly westwards and touched both cheeks — the Mohammedan sign of respect. "Team leader," he told me earnestly, "those who knew the old Tarim shouldn't forget the *akulos*. Do you remember them? See there."

I looked up and saw whole flights of *akulos* circling and clamouring over the reservoir. I laughed to see these harbingers of flood making such a big mistake. This was no flood of the Tarim but a reservoir.

"*Akulos* are intelligent birds," said Bawdin, springing quickly to their defence. "Since the flood waters of the Tarim flow in here, they stay here instead of flying all over the place." Narrowing his eyes he asked softly, "Do you know who made them do this?"

I told him: The soldiers who opened up the Tarim Basin, and Bawdin himself. It was because he'd trapped hares here that we'd found the site for this reservoir.

He fairly shook with laughter. "Do the *akulos* know about my trapping hares? The *akulos*..." He stopped laughing and gripped my arm. "You're joking, team leader. But I caught on long ago. You ought to know that. You were the one who told me."

I couldn't think what he meant and was quite staggered when he went on succinctly:

"You told me here, team leader, that you hadn't come looking for treasure but to build socialism."

I was profoundly stirred by his recollection of what I'd said four years previously. I had never thought he understood.

"I know what socialism means," Bawdin went on. "All we've been seeing today is socialism, and that goes for making the *akulos* fly here too. You tell them, team leader, old Bawdin understands. He can tell anyone...."

For the last few years Grandad Bawdin had acted as guide to many visitors to the Tarim, and to them he had borne witness of the transformation of the region. Yes, the Tarim Basin had leapt over several thousand years of history, from primitive conditions to modern life. And of course the man who knew this best and understood it most deeply was old Bawdin. Earlier on I described him as a witness to the changes in the Tarim's course during the last century, to the Tarim's previous conquests over men. Now this was no longer the entire truth, for the old hunter had become a witness to the leap forward in the history of the Tarim. He himself had leapt from a canoe into a lighter.

Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustrated by Wu Ching-po



Ho Ku-yen

Song of the Spinning Wheel

Division Commander Wang Chien was given a rest leave. He decided to spend it not in a beautiful sanatorium by the sea but in a remote mountain village on the border between the provinces of Hopei and Shansi. Before setting out, he had the carpenter make him a spinning wheel, the kind old women used to spin thread.

These wheels are considered backward now, but during the years of fighting they contributed a good bit to the war effort. Veteran army men, following the twisting mountain paths, understood their value well. They gave rise to many moving stories. Our Division Commander Wang was personally involved in one of them.

More than twenty years ago, in the early stages of the War of Resistance Against Japan, Wang was a platoon leader in a heavy machine-gun company of the Eighth Route Army. He was big and sturdy. Although only in his twenties, he was a first-rate gunner.

Ho Ku-yen is a journalist. His story *Wheelbarrows* was published in *Chinese Literature* No. 6, 1965.

Everyone called him Crackshot Wang. In addition to his skill with the Maxim, Wang was the company live wire. He was a great talker, laughter and singer of local opera. No matter how arduous a march might be, no one ever was downcast with Wang along.

During our counter-assault against a Japanese "mop up" one winter, Wang was wounded. Then, on top of that, he was stricken by malaria. He grew progressively worse. It was decided to hide him away in a peasant's home in a mountain hamlet in one of our guerrilla bases behind the Japanese lines and let him convalesce there.

The hamlet consisted of only eight families. Wang stayed with people named Hsing. They originally were four in all, but a son and daughter-in-law were away, working in the district government. Only the mother and her little grand-daughter, Chrysanthemum, were at home. Mama Hsing was in her fifties. She had lost all her teeth, but she was very healthy. Kind eyes shone in a darkly ruddy face. She was a typical mountain dweller — straightforward, honest, warm-hearted, quite incapable of the slightest false politeness.

When Wang arrived, she looked him over from head to toe and clicked her tongue commiseratingly: "Just see what they've done to you." She quickly brushed the *kang* clean and arranged the coarse printed quilt. Patting the pillow she urged: "You sleep at this end, where it's warmer. The little girl and I will sleep at the other end."

Wang looked at the woman and her four-year-old grand-daughter. "I'd rather sleep on that end," he said.

"I knew you'd try to pull something like that. You may be a platoon leader at the front, but in my house you've got to take orders from me. No more talk now. Get into bed and rest."

The machine gunner had no choice but lie down on the *kang*.

From then on, he was one of the family. The older woman fed him like a child, changed his dressings, urged him to drink his medicine. Only when he was feeling very well did she permit him to get out of bed and do light jobs like stripping kernels from the corn-cobs or boiling water.

The peasants had hidden away most of their grain and household utensils when they were warned that the Japanese were coming into

the mountains. The Hsings' cottage was bare except for sleeping mats on the *kang*, a spinning wheel — also kept on the *kang* by the window — and a stove for cooking. The wheel was an ancient contraption whose handle had been worn smooth by years of use. With cotton fluff adhering to its oily surface, it resembled a white-haired oldster.

Mama Hsing was very devoted to her spinning wheel. At meal-time she removed it to make room — they all ate on the *kang*, then returned it to its original place when the meal was over, carrying it like an infant. Every day she oiled it with drops from her little lamp. And when darkness fell, she lit the lamp and began spinning, seated on one end of the *kang*. The soft buzzing of the wheel continued far into the night. Sometimes Wang would wake up and see her still at work.

"You've been busy all day, Mama Hsing," he would say. "Why don't you get some rest?"

"Go back to sleep," she would reply, without turning her head. "Don't worry about me."

And the rhythmic hum of the wheel would again lull Wang into dreamland.

Extremely deft, Mama Hsing spun thread as fine and even as the strands of a silkworm. She could spin day or night, in the glow of the lamp or in the light of the moon. One night Wang awakened in pitch darkness, except for the faint grey of the paper-paned window. But he heard the wheel humming swiftly.

"What are you doing, mama?"

"Spinning."

"How can you see without a lamp?"

"I'm used to it. Without the lamp we can save some oil."

She told him she had been using this wheel since she was a girl. The women and girls of the hamlet would compete to see who could spin the most, the finest, and the evenest thread. They had been much too poor to afford lamps. All could spin in the light of the moon, or in total darkness.

Chrysanthemum was a very cute child, round-faced, with bangs. Shy of Wang at first, she leaned against the door post, staring at

him with large liquid eyes. After a couple of days, although she worked up enough courage to examine the buttons of his army tunic, she still wouldn't speak. When Wang asked her anything, she dropped her long-lashed eyes and lowered her head. Wang playfully touched her cheek with his finger.

"Can't talk, eh? Must be a little mute."

Chrysanthemum giggled and pushed his finger away. "You're the little mute," she retorted pertly.

Mama Hsing adored her, and Chrysanthemum never left her side whether she was milling flour, cooking, fetching water or cutting fuel. At night, when Mama Hsing was spinning, the child sat beside the wheel, like a quiet little kitten.

One night, after changing his dressing, Wang got into bed. Chrysanthemum demanded attention. She insisted that her grandmother go to sleep with her.

"Don't be naughty, dear," said Mama Hsing. "What's grandma doing?"

"Spinning thread."

"Do you know why?"

"To give to the co-op."

"Oh, what a smart child. Grandma will give the thread to the co-op and the co-op will give grandma money. I'll be able to buy you something good to eat at the fair. What would you like?"

"Shelled peanuts."

"Fine. I'll get you lots and lots of shelled peanuts. I'll fill your pockets with them. And I'll buy you flowers to wear in your hair. What colour flowers do you like?"

"Red."

"Fine. We'll buy red ones, redder than pomegranate flowers in June. All right?"

"All right."

Once more the spinning wheel hummed.

Wang didn't turn around, but he could picture the whole thing: Mama Hsing, with strong steady movements, was revolving the wheel. Chrysanthemum's eyes were fixed on the spindle, watching the twirling snowy white mass growing ever larger. To Wang the

wheel seemed to be alive, a member of Mama Hsing's family. It sang without cease songs which Mama Hsing and Chrysanthemum loved to hear, work songs, happy songs.

One morning the situation suddenly changed. Mama Hsing came rushing into the compound waving her arms. "Get your things together, quick," she shouted to Wang. "We're going up into the mountains. Those murdering Japanese devils are here."

By the time machine-guns began to chatter in the distance, Wang had tied up the bedding into bundles and loaded half a sack of millet and a small pot on to a carrying frame on his back. Mama Hsing took the spinning wheel apart, put the spokes, props and legs in an old gunny sack and handed it to Wang.

"You take this. I'll carry the frame."

"It's too heavy. Better let me carry it."

"Hey. This is no time for politeness. Don't worry. It won't hurt me. If this were ten years ago, I could run straight up that rear mountain with a sack of five pecks of grain on my shoulders, let alone these few little things, without even getting out of breath."

Mama Hsing toted the carrying frame, Wang shouldered the dismantled spinning wheel. With Chrysanthemum walking in front, they left the gate and followed a winding path up the rear mountain.

The mountain was high and secluded, with deep ravines. Halfway up, grotesque boulders seemed to rise abruptly. There were enough caves for a hundred families, to say nothing of eight. You could hide a whole regiment in that mountain, without leaving a trace.

Following Mama Hsing, Wang entered one of the caves. It was as big as a large room. In its deepest recesses was a large straw pallet. Jars and jugs lined one of its walls. By the opposite wall smoke-blackened stones showed where the cooking was done. In other words, the cave was quite well equipped.

As she unloaded the frame with the sack of grain and the bedding bundles from her back, Mama Hsing said: "This is a safe place. Let's see these Japanese devils find us here. Give me a little room, Chrysanthemum. I've got to spread the bedding so that your Uncle Wang can get some rest."



The first day passed without incident. But the Japanese didn't leave. After searching a nearby ravine, they moved into the town of Shihyu. According to Mama Hsing's experience, they should have withdrawn in a day or two. But after a week they showed no signs of going. In gangs of forty or fifty they scoured the mountain, searching for hidden grain and farm implements. At night, they built huge bonfires at every crossroad, both for warmth and in order to detect any movement among the people. Their machine-guns kept firing intermittently until dawn.

This unexpected situation put Mama Hsing in an awkward position. The grain they had brought was gone. But they couldn't go back to the hamlet to get any more because enemy sentries were posted on the hill behind her home. So that Wang shouldn't go hungry, she slipped into the ravine at night and gathered some corn which had not yet been harvested. She stripped the kernels from the ears and prepared to boil them. But the fuel stored in the cave was used up. So she went out again in the night and cut some dry reeds.

At this critical juncture, Wang's malaria returned. He had two attacks. The colour which had just been restored to his cheeks faded away. He grew weak. But he couldn't bear to see Mama Hsing working so hard on his account. One night when she was out after corn, he took a sickle and quietly left the cave, intending to cut some more dry reeds. He had only been cutting for a few minutes when his eyes went dark and he collapsed.

When he revived, he found himself back in the cave. The moment he opened his eyes, Mama Hsing berated him angrily, beating her hands against her knees.

"How can you shame me so?" she demanded. "Political Instructor Wang and Party Secretary Chin personally put you in my care. If anything should happen to you, what could I say?"

"I saw how tired you are," Wang started to explain.

Mama Hsing raised her voice. "I don't want your sympathy. You're a wounded fighter of our communist-led Eighth Route Army and my family's job is to look after you. As long as there's a breath left in my body, I won't let a wounded soldier cut reeds for me."

Seeing how angry she was, Wang was sorry he had been so thoughtless. He decided he ought to apologize. But Mama Hsing, who had been watching him out of the corner of her eye, suddenly laughed. Handing him a bowl of boiled water, she said: "Here, drink this. Then go to sleep."

Wang finished the water, forced himself to drink half a bowl of corn gruel and went to bed. In the middle of the night he heard a humming which told him that the wheel had again started its song. The soft monotonous drone seemed to him more beautiful and moving than any music he had ever known. It broke the lonely stillness of

the mountain depths and brought the warmth of home to the chilly cave. Drowning out the bark of enemy machine-guns, it dominated the early winter night. But before very long, Wang was to hear the song of the spinning wheel no more.

Snow fell heavily one morning, and the Japanese began searching the mountain. Shouting and firing their guns, they searched over the slopes all day like a pack of yellow wolves, returning to the town only at nightfall. Just before they left, they set the mountain ablaze. The northwest wind whipped the flames high. Soon every ridge and rise was scorched black. Wang was ill again that day. His forehead was burning hot, but he trembled with cold. Mama Hsing covered him with both quilts, as well as the old sheepskin coat which had belonged to her husband. When Wang continued to shiver, Mama Hsing gathered him in her arms and instructed Chrysanthemum to lie upon his legs. Warmed by the heat of their bodies, Wang gradually recovered a bit. Mama Hsing remembered that he had eaten nothing since morning. She placed him back down on the pillow and, after a few words of instruction to the little girl, silently went out.

Wang awoke drenched in sweat. He saw Mama Hsing sitting by a tiny lamp flame, picking things out of a wicker tray. Wang had a vague impression that she had left the cave, and he asked: "Did you go down the mountain?"

She gazed at him evenly. "Yes. I gathered some green beans to boil you a broth."

Mama Hsing looked quite distressed in the lamplight, as if she had been weeping. Wang leaned on one elbow.

"Has anything happened?"

She shook her head. "Nothing." She continued sorting through the beans. Wang was sure he had guessed correctly.

"You needn't try to fool me. Something has gone wrong."

Mama Hsing was silent for a long time. Then she sighed. "It's nothing much. Only that the Japanese have burned our little house down."

Wang sat up, electrified. She pushed him down by the shoulders. "Don't get excited, son. If we couldn't weather storms, those

devils would have aggravated us to death long ago. That year of the 'mop up' they murdered people and put crops to the torch. They lit a big pile of stalks and threw our ox into the flames. Our tender newly-picked persimmons they mashed into a pulp with a board. They pissed in our cooking pots.... Do you call them human? A pack of savage beasts!"

He could think of nothing to say that would comfort her. Angrily, he punched his injured leg.

With these words out of her system, Mama Hsing felt better. She wiped her eyes with the hem of her tunic and started to make Wang his broth. But she had no kindling for the fire. She had found some soft wet branches, which she lit. These only smoked but gave no heat.

"Don't bother," Wang said. "You rest. We'll get some dry stalks tomorrow."

"No," she insisted. "You lie down. Don't worry about me." She draped an old piece of gunny sacking over her shoulders and went out.

Wang was exhausted from his bout of malaria. He soon fell asleep, as did the little girl. The next thing he knew, he heard the sound of chopping. He opened his eyes, startled. Mama Hsing was hacking her spinning wheel at the mouth of the cave. Wang leaped out of bed and rushed over. He seized the arm wielding the axe with both hands.

"What are you doing?" he cried.

"Cutting some wood," she replied calmly, "to make a fire for your broth."

"I'd rather die of hunger than let you destroy this wheel," he exclaimed. "It's the treasure of our family."

A smile flitted across Mama Hsing's darkly glistening face. Lightly she patted Wang's hands. "Don't be foolish, son. What's a spinning wheel, anyhow? It's boys like you who are the real treasure of us peasants. As the old saying goes: 'So long as the mountains remain, we'll never lack brushwood for fuel.' Right now your health is more important than anything."

Wang still held on to her tightly. "No matter what you say, I'm not going to let you ruin the wheel. Wait a while. I'll get some fuel."

Mama Hsing laughed. "I was born and raised in these mountains. I can tell you the weight of every stone. If I couldn't find any after looking for hours, what chance would a sick fellow like you have?"

With one blow of the axe she cleaved the shaft in two. Then she chopped the wheel and the legs into kindling.

The noise awakened Chrysanthemum. She sat up and rubbed her eyes. She was startled at the sight of her grandmother destroying the spinning wheel with an axe. The expression on the sweet child's face nearly broke Wang's heart. He ran over and clutched her to his chest. He wanted to say something, but he couldn't utter a word. Tears ran down his cheeks.

Wang's heart was heavy. He felt he owed this child and her grandmother too much. Whenever he had the chance, he helped look for food and water, or tended the fire. At night he no longer heard the quiet song of the wheel. The cave seemed much colder and emptier without it. To Wang the stillness was more unendurable than any noise would have been.

He was longing to get back to his company. Lying on the bed, he ran his fingers over his healing wound and thought: "Get better quickly, wretched thing. See what the people are going through to cure you.... Old battle comrades, where are you now?"

Finally the day he wished for arrived. One cold morning, they heard the thump of exploding hand-grenades coming from the town of Shihyu. Then the company political instructor and the boy who was Wang's ammunition carrier appeared at the entrance to the cave, as if blown there by the northwest wind. Wang's heavy Maxim machine-gun was on his assistant's shoulder. A secret smile that predicted a big victory wreathed the boy's face.

Needless to say, it was a happy reunion. Mama Hsing laughed with tears in her eyes. The political instructor thanked her and gave Wang a new padded cotton uniform. Wang put it on and shouldered his heavy machine-gun. When he stood boldly before Mama Hsing to say goodbye, she placed both hands against his chest.

"How fine and brave you look," she commended. "That's the way I like to see you."

Recalling her kindness, Wang felt his eyes smart. "I owe you many thanks, mama," he replied.

She waved that away. "I don't want to hear any politeness. If you really want to thank me, go out and smash those Japanese fiends. Stab them with bayonets, blow them up with grenades. If they still don't surrender, wipe them out to the last man."

Twenty years had passed since their parting. Wang fought over half of China in the years that followed. His boyish face was scorched tough and ruddy by the flames of battle. The fuzz on his upper lip grew into a full moustache. In twenty years he knew much sorrow and many joys.

He rose to regiment, then division, commander. His mind was filled each day with more problems than the waves of the Yellow River. Some of the past he forgot, but he never forgot Mama Hsing—neither on the joyous night of August 15, 1945, when the Japanese surrendered, nor during the furious war of liberation, nor when they stormed into Nanking, "capital" of Chiang Kai-shek. His memories of Mama Hsing and Chrysanthemum and the dark damp cave were always with him. The flying wheels of the artillery caissons, the great windmills in the rice fields south of Yangtse, all reminded him of the spinning wheel Mama Hsing had destroyed for his sake.

He had long been hoping to return to the mountain hamlet and see Mama Hsing and Chrysanthemum, but he had always been too busy. Now, with a convalescent leave, his chance had come. He bought them many presents, including the spinning wheel he had asked the carpenter to make. Wang was very satisfied with the wheel. He considered it the most valuable of his gifts.

Carrying the wheel and a few pieces of simple luggage, Wang set out. He travelled by train and by bus, then walked for two days until he reached the mountain hamlet. He knew Mama Hsing didn't need the wheel he had lugged all this distance. Spinning wheels were out of date even in the back country hills where he had fought as a guerrilla. It was intended only as a memento of their days in the

cave, a symbol of gratitude from a son to a mother. When he was still a platoon leader Wang had learned these words, and they had remained for ever engraved on his marble-clean heart:

"To forget the past is treachery."

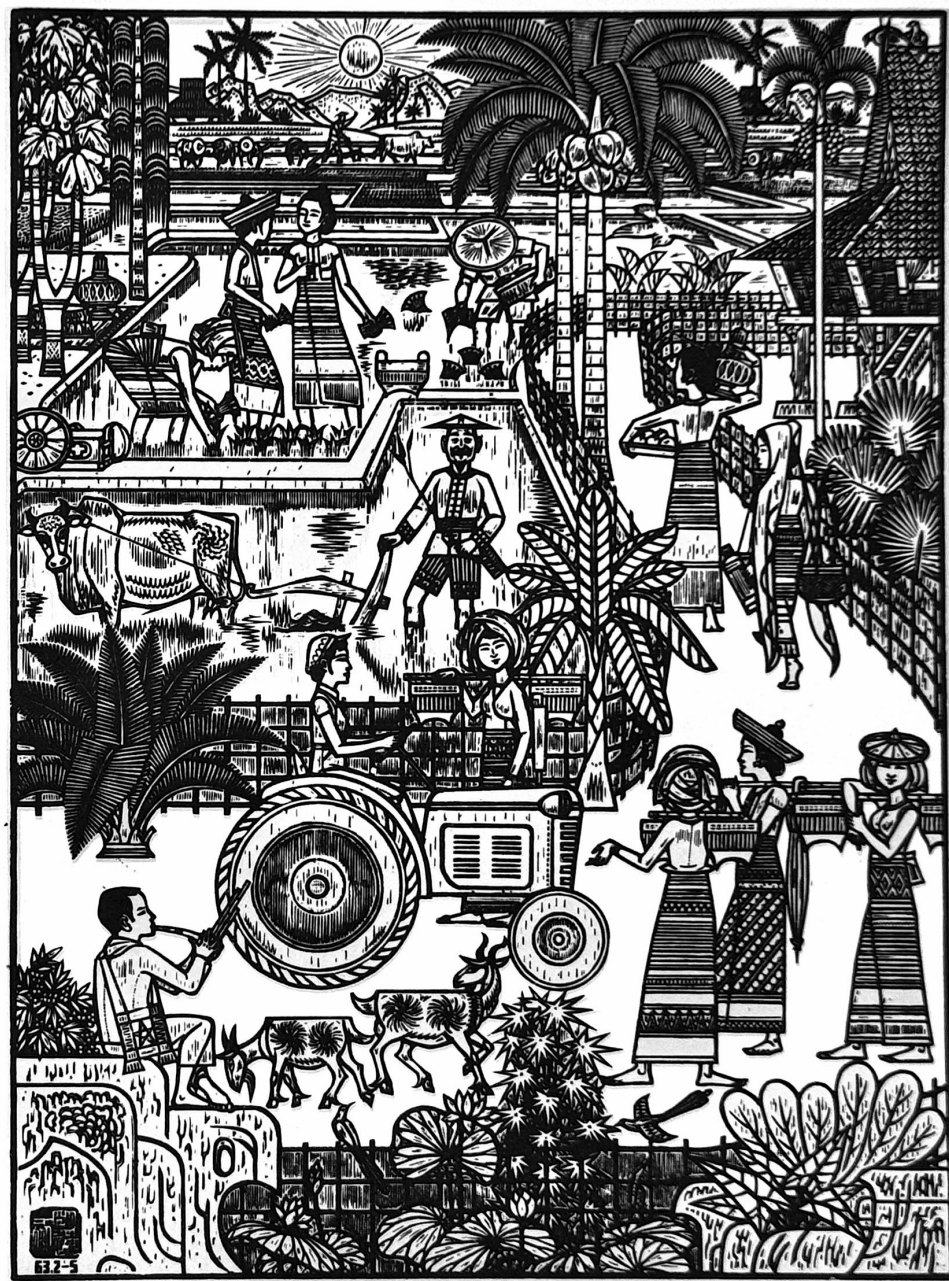
Yes, spinning wheels were now backward. They were being replaced by modern textile machinery. The day would come when children would see them only in pictures in their history books. But the song of the spinning wheel would resound always throughout the breadth of our glorious land, stirring men's hearts.

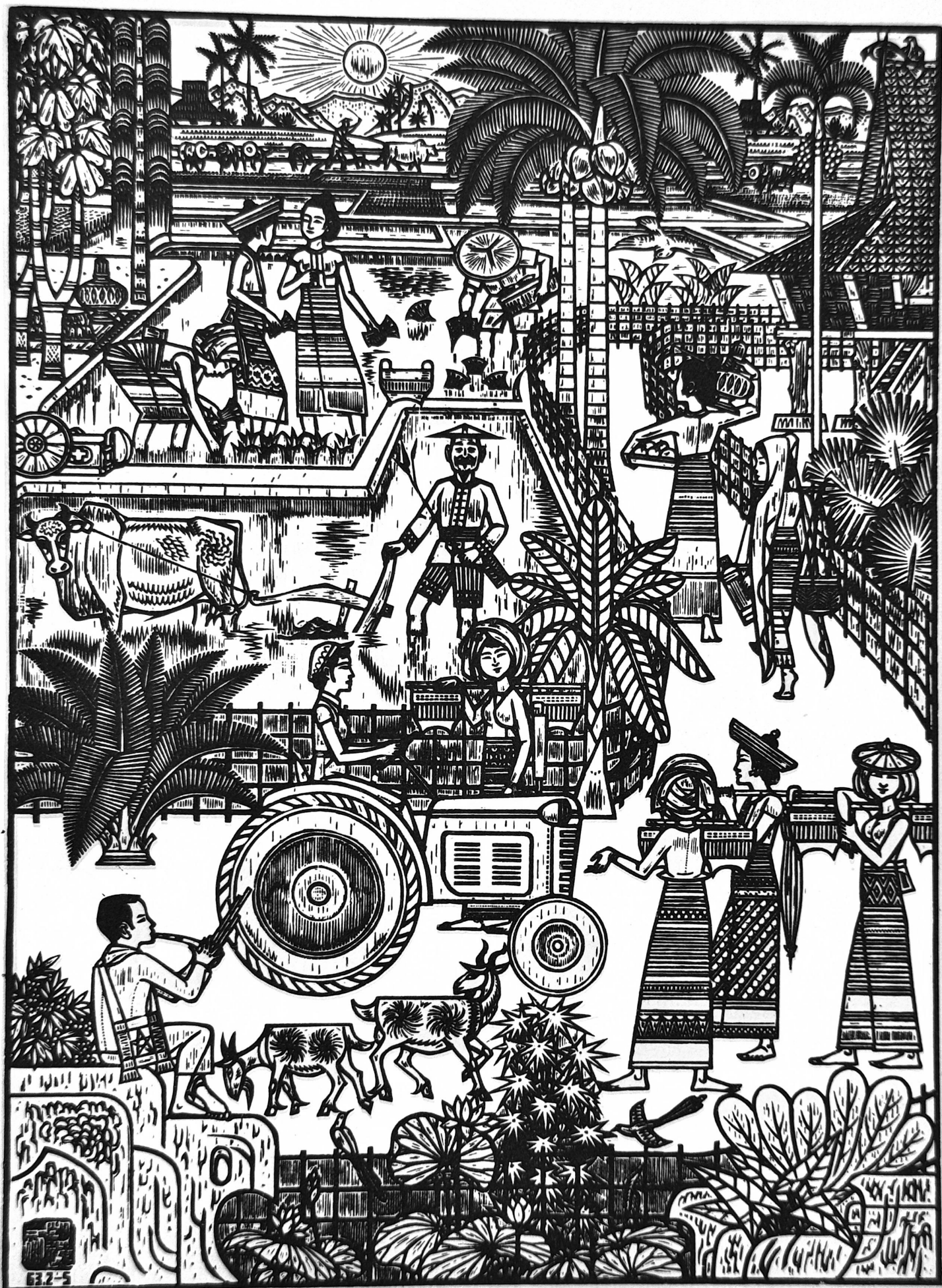
Translated by Sidney Shapiro

Illustrated by Chen Tung

Spring Comes Early to the Tais (coloured woodcut) by Chao Ming-yuan ►

Chao Ming-yuan is a young artist from the Chinese People's Liberation Army. His works are very much influenced by the traditional woodcut and very decorative. The Tais are a minority people living in the subtropical region in southwest China.





Li Chiu-hsiang

Three Tough Problems

Our division's Quartermaster Li Shu-chi is a veteran with years of experience at the front. Even in battle our men are always sure of getting their food and having a place to sleep.

Recently new talent began emerging among our division personnel. For example, Comrade Fang Kuo-liang, head of the Ever Victorious Company's mess, learned to make a great variety of dishes, getting fine results with the simplest of ingredients. Many of the boys compared their mess hall favourably with the Peace Restaurant in the city. The kitchen was considered one of the regiment's best. Six months ago, when its reputation was at its height, Quartermaster Li took the mess hall squad into the field and put it to the test. He gave the cooks three problems: to dissipate the smoke from their stove, to burn green branches and wet grass, to cook in the dark without showing any light. The result was they failed in all three.

Li Chiu-hsiang is an amateur writer in the armed forces.

Some of the men in the company remarked sarcastically: "That might be all right for the Peace Restaurant, but it's not much of a showing for an army field kitchen."

When they heard this, the cooks felt very put out. Young Liu of the rice cooking team complained to the quartermaster that the problems he put were tougher than eating with one chopstick. "They have to be," Li replied. "Battle conditions are much tougher."

The next day the squad held a meeting to discuss how to cook out in the field during combat. In view of their previous days' showing they agreed it wasn't easy.

"Haven't you had any experience with problems like that?" Young Liu asked the squad leader.

"I never even heard of them before."

"Then how are we going to learn to cope?"

At that moment Quartermaster Li dropped in. When he saw the expression on everyone's face, he smiled and asked: "What's the matter, boys? In the dumps?"

The squad leader jumped to his feet. "We're way under par, quartermaster."

"Cure your weak points and you'll move ahead."

"That kind of know-how isn't easy to get."

"I don't think it's so hard. It all depends on your approach. The main thing is to remember that we're a company mess, not the Peace Restaurant."

"How do we go about it?"

"Practise. And I'll practise with you. Squad Leader Fang, Private Li is reporting for duty."

"You're kidding, quartermaster."

"Not a bit. From now on, I'm an ordinary soldier in your squad. The company commander will announce it before the whole company pretty soon."

Young Liu jumped for joy. "Wonderful, quartermaster."

"Forget that quartermaster stuff. Call me Old Li."

"Right, Old Li. We certainly need you."

A month later, when Li was about to return to his regular job, Young Liu addressed him on behalf of the squad. "Old Li — I

mean quartermaster, come around again after a while and you'll see that we've won back our reputation. We'll be rid of that 'Peace Restaurant' label for ever."

Li nodded. "Good. It's a deal."

The quartermaster wasn't able to visit the Ever Victorious Company for another four months. But when he did, he asked young Liu: "Remember that deal we made?" The comrades in the mess hall squad were sure he had come to try them in the field again. But they weren't worried, for in those four months they had been practising diligently. Everything Li had taught them when he served in their squad they could do smoothly, including the three tasks they had flunked the previous time. So they were looking forward to being put to the test again.

But two days passed without a word from Li. The men were growing impatient. Young Liu was a clever lad. He guessed what was behind the delay.

"The quartermaster's waiting for a rainstorm. Naturally, those are the hardest conditions for a field kitchen to operate in."

That sounded right to the others. They all began secretly longing for rain.

But then one scorcher of a day, when if you threw water on the ground it immediately turned to steam, the quartermaster called after lunch. He told the squad leader to take his men into the field and begin cooking. The quartermaster watched every man carefully as the squad prepared to set forth. Stove-tender Wang hurried to the door and looked up. There wasn't a wisp of cloud in the sky. He came back and put a few matches and a bit of striking paper in his breast pocket.

A few minutes later, the squad was assembled and ready. Suddenly Quartermaster Li changed their destination.

"To Huakang Monastery, squad leader," he ordered Fang. "At the double."

Aha, thought Fang, so you want to see how fast we can travel. "Right," he replied. "Comrades, let's go."

As they left camp, Li strode in the lead along a path towards the rear of the mountain. The comrades of the mess hall squad followed



closely in single file, each man carrying equipment on his back or shoulders. The sun was hot, the humidity was high, and they were travelling quickly. But the men moved easily, and no one got out of breath.

By the time they neared the old monastery, Li's clothes were drenched in sweat. You could have wrung a bowl of water out of his hat. He looked the squad over and thought to himself: This is it.

"We'll stop here," he said. "Start cooking."

The men immediately went into action. Wang rolled up his sleeves, stamped on the ground, then drew a circle with his shovel. "We'll dig our stove on this spot. There are no big stones or roots," he said to his assistant, Young Chien. "Let's get started."

He threw a pinch of dust into the air to check the wind direction and decide which way the door of the stove should face. Then he

and Young Chien went to work. In a little over six minutes they had completed an earthen stove that could dissipate the smoke. Wang wiped the perspiration from his brow and pulled some matches out of his pocket. He uttered an exclamation of dismay. Sweat had soaked the matches and their sulphur tips were soft and crumbling.

Quartermaster Li nearly laughed aloud. He took out a lighter. Crinkling his eyes, he said to Wang jestingly: "Never thought you'd get your matches wet on a clear day like this, eh?"

Wang blinked. It was quite true. He had been careless. He usually kept his matches wrapped in a piece of oiled paper when they cooked away from home.

"So you see, little slips can cause big losses. My first problem was for you to light your stove after a forced march. Let this be a lesson to you. Here, take my lighter."

"We don't need it."

"If you intend to wait ten minutes till your matches dry in the sun, you won't be able to get your rice cooked in the required time."

"Don't worry, quartermaster. When Young Chien finishes the chimney I'll light up at once."

"Your matches won't be dry by then."

"I can manage." Wang produced an empty cartridge shell and extracted from it a few matches and a strip of striking paper. A moment later, dry faggots were crackling in the stove.

"You sure can think up problems, quartermaster," Wang said with a smile. "If I didn't have these emergency matches ready, I certainly would have been on the spot."

"Good. You've solved Problem One. But Problem Two is harder."

"What is it, quartermaster?"

Li laughed. "Don't be in such a hurry. It isn't time yet. I can't reveal a military secret in advance. But you'd better be prepared for a tough one."

At that moment, Fang came up with two buckets of water on a shoulder pole. "Squad leader," Li said to him. "Your mess hall has a slogan reading: 'We serve the same good dishes here or in the field.' Do you really mean that?"

"Of course."

"Well, your menu for tonight promises steamed rolls and soup with shredded meat and pickle bits. Right?"

"Right. Young Liu is making some quick rising dough this very minute."

"Ah." The quartermaster stood up and entered the tent which had just been erected. He was astonished to find the young assistants all blindfolded, yet working at top speed. Li laughed and nodded approvingly. They had learned to operate with equal facility in darkness or in light.

With quick chops of his knife, Young Liu cut a roll of dough into pieces exactly the right size for steamed rolls. They were so uniform they looked as if they had all come from the same mould.

Li was about to ask: Where are the steam trays, when Young Huang produced a wire frame from his knapsack, unfolded it and stretched three pieces of clean white cloth across the three levels of the frame. On these he neatly arranged the cut pieces of dough. Fang then carried the entire contraption out of the tent. Li followed him.

Fang placed the device in the pot and covered it with a lid. Wang poked up the fire. The flames leaped as though he had added oil. Before long, the water in the pot was bubbling. In another ten minutes the rolls would be done.

It's a lucky thing I didn't tell these boys that my second problem was to make steamed rolls out in the field, Li thought to himself, otherwise, they'd have beat me again.

"What's Problem Two, quartermaster?" Wang pressed him with a smile.

Luckily, while Li was fumbling for words, a messenger came running up and reported: "Our company has set up on the rear of the mountain for a night exercise. The commander wants the cook squad to deliver the food there."

This gave Li the inspiration for his second problem. "Squad leader," he said to Fang, "our position here has been spotted by the enemy. You have five minutes to move the kitchen to the rear of the mountain."

"Right," Fang promptly assented.

Wang groaned. "How can we take the rolls off the fire just as they're being steamed?"

"Anything can happen in battle," Li retorted. "If you don't move, an enemy artillery shell is liable to move you and your stove together. This is my second problem: 'Shift the kitchen quickly without hurting the steamed rolls.' What do you say? Can you do it?"

Wang stared at his squad leader, baffled. But Young Liu, who had been listening, dashed over and shouted: "What are you waiting for? Build up the fire and finish steaming the rolls. They're nearly ready."

"Say, that's right." Wang started adding fuel. Fang stepped forward and stopped him.

"Not so fast. This is a battlefield. Every minute's delay brings needless losses. Move immediately. Everybody keep calm. Strike the tent and pack the hampers just as we practised it."

He directed the next order to Wang. "You and Young Chien go to the rear of the mountain at the double, dig a new stove and get it going. Young Liu and I will take care of this end."

"Right." Carrying a shovel and a bundle of faggots, Wang and Young Chien flew off to the rear of the mountain.

"Squad leader," Young Liu said to Fang, "we can move fast enough. But those steamed rolls will be raw in the centre."

"We've got brains. Why can't we prevent it?"

"If we take them off the fire and the steam dies down in the pot, of course they'll be underdone."

But Fang had a plan. "Open that bedding pack," he said.

Suddenly Young Liu understood. He swiftly complied. Quartermaster Li lent a hand. The three of them wrapped the quilt around the pot and tied it securely. Then Young Liu and Fang hung the pot on a pole which they supported on their shoulders and trotted off. Li smiled and nodded, very satisfied.

He looked at his watch. The squad had cleared out in less than three minutes. That was up to standard, but the steamed rolls were going to be troublesome. If the stove wasn't dug quickly on the rear of the mountain and a roaring fire built, if the men's shoulders couldn't support their heavy load properly and the pot wobbled in the course of being carried and water splashed the rolls, the whole operation would fail. Or if any of the men co-ordinated too slowly, the rolls would end up with raw centres. This was the first time the squad had ever attempted such an exercise, and there was no guarantee they would succeed. The quartermaster thought he'd better explain to the comrades of the company. He hurried towards the rear of the mountain.

Li found the company resting on a slope. After a few quiet words to the commander, Li rose and addressed the men. "There's something I have to tell you, comrades," he said. "I've just given your mess hall squad a very tough problem, namely, to shift the kitchen while the steamed rolls are half cooked. It's quite possible that tonight you'll have to eat rolls with raw centres or, even worse, boiled dough soup. Any objections?"

"No," the men cried in chorus.

Why was this? Because four months before, when Li put three hard problems to the mess hall squad, although at the time the men had to eat a few underdone meals, the final result was to improve the squad's technique so that it now prepared excellent food in the field as well as in camp. New problems posed by the quartermaster would make the squad even better. Naturally there were no objections.

But the men couldn't help wondering why Li was specially notifying them. Was there some joke behind it? As they were talking and laughing, they saw a group of soldiers, all carrying things on their backs and shoulders, hastening down towards them over a ridge. Chief of the mess hall squad, Comrade Fang, was in the lead. Even before he reached them, he shouted to the company commander: "Shall we serve the meal?"

The company commander nodded. "You can start as soon as it's ready."

The mess hall squad set down their burdens. Quartermaster Li hurried over and opened the pot of boiling water. The rolls inside were soft and steamy. He bit into one of them.

"Delicious. You've put sugar in them, too." He turned to the company and said humorously. "Comrades, I withdraw my announcement. For your evening meal you're getting sweetened rolls and soup with shredded meat and pickle bits."

Everybody laughed. By then the food was served. The men savoured it appreciatively. "With a cook squad like ours," they said, "we can practise and fight with extra vigour."

The company commander smiled. "We can thank our superiors for this. They've sent Quartermaster Li to work with our company directly. He's helped us solve a lot of big problems."

Li waved his hand disparagingly. "Credit belongs to the mess hall squad comrades. They've made rapid progress in their thinking and technique these past four months. They've practised very hard according to plan." He turned to the company commander. "I saw your plan yesterday for the next stage of training. Regarding the mess hall squad, I've got some ideas." Smiling, he said something in a low voice in the company commander's ear.

The company commander smacked himself on the thigh. "Good, good. I agree completely. Let's synchronize our watches."

At this, the men of the kitchen squad exchanged glances. "Quartermaster Li must be ready with his third problem," they thought. Sure enough, Li walked over to them. Fang, the squad leader, jumped to his feet.

"Do you have a new assignment for us, quartermaster?"

Li didn't answer immediately. Hah! They're taking the initiative, he thought. Shall I start now? It's not quite dark enough. He looked the comrades of the squad over, one by one — Fang, who gave such imaginative leadership; Chien, the expert stove builder; Wang, who kept it primed so well; Liu, the rice and noodles specialist.... Suddenly, he noticed that Liu was lacking a piece of special equipment. That gave the quartermaster the lead he wanted for his Problem Three.

"Comrade Fang," he said, "there are two wounded soldiers in the company. They want noodles. I give you thirty minutes to deliver. The kitchen you can set up at the foot of that mountain. Don't go too far away."

The mess hall squad at once set out. Li followed with a young messenger. On the way, he gave the boy some instructions. The messenger grinned and departed.

Every man of the squad was soon in action, erecting the tent, lighting the stove. Young Liu was kneading dough on a board. Li walked over to him and waited till he finished. Then he asked with a casual smile:

"How are you going to roll that dough — with your hands?"

Liu laughed. "So that's the catch in your Problem Three. You've lost again, quartermaster."

"How come?"

"You'll see." He pulled a spatula from its foot-long wooden handle and held up the handle triumphantly. "How's that for a rolling pin?"

"*Aiya*. You boys not only have emergency matches, you've got double-use spatulas."

"That's not all. Here's a triple-use tray. We can serve food on it, carry ammunition, and in an emergency it can be used as a stretcher. And here's a double-use basket. It can carry food, and when you turn it over it's a table."

"Excellent. These are very good ideas. That's the way a model mess hall squad ought to be — everything to fit the needs of battle. When the actual fighting starts, you'll be able to go anywhere, cook anywhere, deliver your meals anywhere."

He was interrupted by two red signal flares sailing into the sky. Li looked at his watch. The manoeuvre had begun. He addressed himself to Fang.

"Wait a bit with that food for the wounded. You've got to fight now."

Hearing this, the men seized their guns and unhooked their hand-grenades from the back of their belts. All quickly gathered round their squad leader.

Li said to him: "The signal flares the company commander just fired mean that the enemy has scattered. Your squad must guard the path from the mountain gap to the main road. Don't let a single enemy escape. Is that clear?"

"It's clear."

"Then, take off."

"Right. Squad, follow me."

Bending forward at the waist, the men raced behind Fang to a rise. Here, he gave his orders: "Young Liu, you and first team guard the gap. Wang, you and second team seal off the road. Third team stay here with me."

No sooner had the teams taken up their respective positions than a flashing target appeared at the end of the road. "Enemy," yelled Fang. Wang raised his rifle and fired. The target fell.

Another flashing target appeared halfway up the slope. Fang brought that down with one shot. Quartermaster Li, who was standing behind Fang, cheered the men's fine marksmanship.

Then Li shouted: "The enemy are fleeing."

"Charge," roared Fang. Echoing his cry, the men separated and pursued in the direction of the road and the gap.

In a loud voice, Li announced: "The battle is over."

As Fang led his squad back, the men were in high spirits. Chatting and laughing, they praised Fang's leadership and Wang's shooting, and commended Young Liu's bold movements.

The quartermaster smiled. "On the basis of your showing today, comrades, I think we ought to change your nickname from 'Peace Restaurant' to 'Front-line Mess Hall.' What do you say?"

"That suits us right down to the ground, quartermaster," Young Liu replied. "These past four months that 'Peace Restaurant' sign-board has been pressing us flat."

Everybody laughed. They were still chatting when they returned to the tent.

"Don't be so busy feeling good that you forget about those noodles for the wounded men," Li reminded them with a smile.

"That's right," said Young Liu. He hurried into the tent. "*Aiya*," they heard him exclaim. "Squad leader, the dough is missing."

"Could some wild animal have snatched it?" another comrade asked.

"*Aiya*, our hamper is gone too."

At this, everyone began searching for the missing articles inside the tent and out.

Very strange, Fang thought. Who could have come to this remote ravine? There's something fishy going on.

Just then the messenger came running up. He was laughing. "My raid on the camp has been carried out successfully, quartermaster," he reported. "I claim the following booty: A big lump of dough and a large hamper. I've handed them over to the company commander."

The men were thunderstruck. Fang rushed up and grasped Li's hand. "You've taught us a good lesson, quartermaster. Before we concentrated on cooking in the mess hall and forgot about cooking at the front. This time we concentrated on fighting and lost our field kitchen."

"It's not only the field kitchen you lost. As the old saying goes: 'Man is iron but food is steel.' How can an army fight without eating? You've lost our 'rear.'"

"Right. I certainly am stupid."

"No, you're not. You catch on immediately."

Young Liu was irritated. "So we flunked the third problem after all."

"What are you grumbling about?" Fang laughed. "Don't you remember what the quartermaster told us: 'Cure your weak points

and you'll move ahead.' It doesn't matter that we failed. We'll practise some more and next time we'll show them a thing or two."

"That's the way to talk," Li commended. "Show us what you can do next time. You did quite a good job today. Just remember when you're practising that the whole purpose of it is to use your skills in battle. I'll drop around again in a few days and give you another test. What do you say, Young Liu, do you think you fellows can pass?"

The boy expanded his chest and replied smartly: "Just watch us, quartermaster."

"Good. It's a deal."

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

Illustrated by Shen Yen-tai

Two Old Stagers

It was Sunday and Chen, one of the factory's oldest hands, was staying at home.

Outside his window the green branches of the willows hung motionless. Inside the room it was very quiet. It was a hot afternoon. The tireless cicadas were shrilling a summer lullaby.

Chen seemed to have something on his mind which made him disinclined to take a nap. At fifty he was by no means hard of hearing. He knew who was coming as soon as he heard footsteps on the staircase. Soon after, someone coughed unnecessarily outside his door. "Come in, Old Liu," said Chen listlessly. "Don't stand on ceremony."

In came a man of about the same age, rubbing his newly-shaved head. "What? I'm not welcome? Then... I'll go home," he said, chuckling.

"Of course you're welcome, mate."

Chen never put himself out to entertain Old Liu, who always took a seat without waiting to be invited and helped himself to tea. Liu sat down and picked up a palm-leaf fan. "How about a game of chess?" he asked, fanning himself.

Hu Wan-chun is a worker in a rolling mill in Shanghai. In *Chinese Literature* No. 4, 1965 we published an article by him *How I Took Up Writing*.

"No, not interested." Chen shook his head.

"Well, mate, I can see there's something on your mind," Liu said light-heartedly, sipping the tea.

Chen did not deny this. The two men had worked together for fifteen years and knew each other well. There had been no change all that time in Old Liu's lean, swarthy face, grey cotton uniform and black cloth shoes. In 1949 when Liu joined the factory, Chen remembered distinctly, he had worn a faded khaki army uniform and the same sort of black cloth shoes, the sole difference being that he had no socks on then and the shoes were tied with two laces. Chen greatly admired Liu's simple way of living and modelled himself on him in this respect. More important, Old Liu had been through the Long March and was a seasoned revolutionary who had been wounded in battle and served for some time as a battalion commander. He was the first Party secretary of the factory and had helped not only Chen himself, but his apprentice Ah-tang as well, to mature politically and finally to become full-fledged Party members. Now Chen had advanced from an ordinary fitter to the head of his workshop, while all the "youngsters" had become first-grade cadres. Only Old Liu was still Party secretary of the workshop. All the other birds had flown high, but Liu remained in his old nest.

"I can't hide from you what's on my mind, Old Liu," said Chen with a sigh. "Fact is, I'm rather sorry for you."

"Why? I'm doing fine." Liu was amazed.

"You joined the revolution before me. You were my guide and pioneered the way," Chen said earnestly. "But now you are the Party secretary while I'm the head of our workshop. It doesn't seem fair, my being on a par with you."

"What nonsense!" Old Liu laughed.

Chen flushed and was silent.

Liu knew very well this was not what was worrying Chen. Something else had put these ideas into his head. Liu was secretly perturbed. A veteran worker like Chen shouldn't take things that way. But Liu was not sure how to approach this problem.

"Toot... toot!" A child was blowing a trumpet on the balcony opposite. The sound was quite ear-splitting.



"Look at that boy, the image of Ah-tang. Like father, like son," Chen remarked as he closed the window.

Liu's heart warmed as he looked at the child, his cheeks red and puffed up with the exertion of blowing. He remembered that in 1950, when a band was first set up in their factory, the little boy's

father Ah-tang had practised blowing the trumpet every morning on the balcony just as the child was doing now. Ah-tang had been fifteen then, with a round, chubby face. One day he was going all out but kept blowing the wrong notes. Liu walked over, saying, "Give it to me. I'll show you how to do it." Sure enough, it was a pleasure to listen to him.

"Were you a bugler?" asked Ah-tang.

Liu nodded.

"When?"

Liu looked up reflectively. "Well, during the Long March, when I was your age."

"Then you were a fighter?" asked Ah-tang admiringly.

"Hmm."

From then on Ah-tang stuck to Liu, listening to his revolutionary stories and learning trumpeting from him. Under Liu's influence Ah-tang made great progress. And now Ah-tang's son was in turn trying his hand at the trumpet. The thought filled Liu with unspeakable satisfaction as he stood up and opened the window.

"Hey, sonny!" he shouted to the boy. "You've got it all wrong."

"Have I?" the child called back. "I'm doing as dad told me."

"Listen." Old Liu put his right hand to his mouth like a trumpet. "Tu — tu-tu-ti — tu — tu-do-ti-tu-do . . ."

"That's it, I know," the child cried cheerfully. "That's what dad taught me. I just can't get it right."

"Take it step by step. First learn to blow the different notes."

"Right. Thanks for the tip."

"Are you a bugler for the Young Pioneers?"

"Yes, but I haven't learned properly yet."

"You will, if you have patience."

Liu left the window, drawing a deep breath. "That child should turn out just as well as his father," he remarked confidently.

"You're behaving like a child yourself, Old Liu," said Chen.

"Aren't you pleased? You should be. He's the son of your apprentice." Liu started singing the praises of Ah-tang.

"That's enough. Stop lauding him to the skies."

"I know you're a bit . . ."

Liu left the sentence unfinished as Chen turned red. As a matter of fact, he knew perfectly well what was going on in his friend's mind. A fitter for thirty years and more, Chen had trained altogether ten apprentices. In the past he had been annoyed when they did not work hard enough to master the job, yet today he was vexed by his best apprentice — Ah-tang. Still he could not have said just what Ah-tang had done to offend him. A poor lad in the old society, Ah-tang entered the factory at the age of eleven. His head shaved, his eyes bewildered, he stood watching by Chen's lathe, looking both clumsy and foolish. But he was an honest lad with a genuine respect for his master. And Chen in turn became very fond of him, behaving like a father to the orphaned boy and passing on to him all the tricks of the trade.

After the liberation the boy made rapid progress and Chen was always very pleased to hear him commended. "He's doing well, forging steadily ahead. I am proud of him," he would say. Later, Ah-tang was twice elected a model worker. "Ah-tang is one of my best apprentices," Chen told everybody he met. When Chen was made head of the workshop, Ah-tang took over his old post of section head and Chen went on helping him just as before. In 1958 Ah-tang was promoted to be a deputy director of the technology department. This put him in the same rank as Chen who, however, was only too delighted by Ah-tang's progress. But recently something had happened....

"Originally the Party committee suggested that you should take up the post of deputy director of the technology department, Old Liu." Chen could contain himself no longer. "Wouldn't that have suited you fine? But you insisted you weren't up to it and recommended Ah-tang."

"You know how poor my health is — stomach trouble all the time and that old wound has started aching again.... Besides, we should give more responsibility to the youngsters. Ah-tang is better qualified than either of us. He's young and strong. He's also got the know-how. It's only right to promote him."

"It can be done gradually. Ah-tang is only twenty-nine this year. Is he equal to such an important task?" Chen sighed. "Experience counts. I think he's going to find it hard to cope."



"It's no problem. We older fellows can lend him a hand."

Again they heard the trumpet blare from the opposite balcony. Then a man's voice: "Got it? That's the way to blow." Old Liu looked out of the window and saw Ah-tang, a cigarette in his left hand, giving a trumpet lesson to his son. Ah-tang's face, so boyish a dozen years ago, now wore an expression of maturity. He put the trumpet to his mouth and started blowing again.

"See that? There was a time when Ah-tang didn't know how to blow the trumpet. But isn't he doing very well now?" Old Liu

smiled. "To make progress a man needs somebody to teach him but he also needs to work hard himself. That's the only way to acquire experience."

Chen shook his head helplessly.

"Hullo, is that Old Liu there?" shouted Ah-tang. "Look, you taught me to blow the trumpet and now I'm teaching my son." He caressed the boy's head. Then he caught sight of Chen seated to one side. "Have you checked the size of the new rolling mill, master?" he asked, "The factory leadership will hold another meeting tomorrow morning to finalize certain things."

Old Liu watched Chen who said rather sullenly, "Yes, director." Then Chen slapped his leg hard.

"You like to have your joke, master." Ah-tang laughed.

After Ah-tang and his son had gone in, Liu said to Chen, "That wasn't right of you."

"How do you expect me to take it?" Chen flared up.

"Put the work first."

Chen wanted to say something but refrained. He lit a cigarette instead. He could never forget what had happened the previous afternoon. The management committee was discussing the installation of the new rolling mill, and when he went in to report on his section's work he found that Ah-tang was presiding at the meeting. What an awkward situation. Who ever heard of a master reporting to his apprentice? He remained mute in his seat until Ah-tang singled him out. "Give us your report about the new rolling mill, master." Flushing up to his ears, Chen felt all eyes fixed upon him. The meeting came to a temporary halt with everybody urging him, "Time is short, please go ahead." Haltingly and reluctantly, he made his report. He could hardly believe his ears when Ah-tang said, "Well, it seems we have been slack in our work. Your workshop should speed up too, master. I just heard some of the workers say the measurements of the base of the machine aren't according to specifications." Chen all but fainted. An apprentice criticizing his master before so many people! He would have flared up but was not sure what to say. He simply walked away without uttering a word. The recollection of that scene still rankled. "Old Liu,"

he said, "if you were the director, I'd think nothing of reporting to you on the work and wouldn't mind if you criticized me either. But Ah-tang was my apprentice. How can I take orders from him?"

Liu stepped forward and put a hand on Chen's shoulder. "Listen, mate," he said earnestly. "One of our tests, yours and mine, today is seeing whether we can take orders from those 'below us.'"

"This is something new to me and quite beyond me. Here," Chen took his notebook from his pocket and put it on the table. "All the information about the new rolling mill is written down here. You make the report."

Quite ruffled, Liu took the notebook and turned a few pages before putting it in his pocket. "All right, I'll report to Ah-tang," he agreed after a while.

It became unusually quiet in the room. Even the cicadas outside the window were silent and the willow branches hung motionless. Dusk was falling. White clouds in the azure sky started to be tinged red by the setting sun. All nature seemed to be in a pensive mood.

"Guess what I've got with me, master!"

Ah-tang, wearing a pair of slippers, came in laughingly. He had a bottle of wine in his left hand and a packet of cooked meat in his right. Unaware of the tension in the air, he put his purchases on the table, got out some cups and chopsticks and poured wine.

"These are your favourite dishes, master. Pork and beef, how's that?" Then, turning to Liu, he said, "You don't know, Old Liu, what my master was like in the past. He used to tell me, 'Ah-tang, when you grow up I know you'll do better than your master. But you mustn't forget me. I'll be quite satisfied if you just treat me to a little wine, a dish of pork or beef. Let your master offer you his congratulations and take pleasure in your success.' Wasn't that nicely said?"

"Did you say that to Ah-tang?" asked Liu.

"Yes." Chen felt unaccountably embarrassed.

"Speaking of the past, master not only taught me my trade, he made clothes for me too. Whenever I fooled about he came down on me sharply.... Come on, Old Liu, master, let's drink. Well, I never minded my master being strict with me. If not for him I

wouldn't have learned any real skill." Ah-tang sipped his wine and seemed as carefree as when he was a youngster. "If master lost his temper or was in the dumps, I'd set to work to cheer him up until soon he was laughing. I assure you, I know how to handle my master."

The blare of a trumpet sounded from the opposite balcony.

Old Liu and Ah-tang burst out laughing, and even Chen had to smile. The atmosphere was no longer tense. Old Liu took out the notebook and said, "Ah-tang, shall I report to you now about the machine?"

Ah-tang was astonished. "Why should *you* report?"

"Does it make any difference? You just listen and then say what you think, all right?" Old Liu proceeded to give the report in earnest. He noticed Ah-tang looked on edge. "Take it easy. Think of the job, not of the people involved. What shortcomings do you still see in our work?"

"Old Liu, you are my senior, how can you . . . If it were master, that would be all right with me. I know he'll still tell me home truths and bawl me out, but you . . ." Ah-tang was thoroughly embarrassed.

"So you discriminate between me and your master!"

"No, well, yes, there's a little difference."

"I'd rather you treated me in the same way."

This conversation had gone to Chen's heart. He felt very cut up. "Ah-tang, speak your mind," he said. "I should have given you this report but I, well, let's ignore it . . . Let's hear your frank opinions."

Ah-tang had no choice but to explain his viewpoint.

"We'll do what the factory leadership thinks fit," declared Liu earnestly.

"I'm young and very inexperienced," said Ah-tang. "I need your help badly. Come on, let's drink to the health of you two old stagers."

Chen's hand holding the cup shook, he was so moved. After clinking cups with Liu and Ah-tang he drained the wine. Then Ah-tang left to fetch them two bowls of noodles.

"The waves behind urge on those ahead," quoted Liu with considerable feeling. "Old Chen, we old stagers can't live for ever — who's to carry on our cause? We must leave it to the younger generation. We should be happy to see them grow up. We should make way for them and let them march on."

Chen nodded, deep in thought.

The child started blowing another blast on his trumpet, but this time Chen found it did not grate on his ears.

Twilight had set in. Insects were chirping in the grass outside the window. The evening clouds were ablaze behind the dark green willows. Refreshing, invigorating night was descending over the land.

Translated by Chang Su

Illustrated by Lu Yen

Sha Pai

East Flows the Mighty Yangtse

East flows the mighty Yangtse....
Ten thousand *li*
Of white-capped waves,
Heaving billows,
Drums and bugles,
Wind and thunder;
No turning back
Till she reaches the great ocean,
No resting

Sha Pai is a young poet.

Night or day
As she rouses field after field,
Sweeps through gorge after gorge
And engulfs stream after stream....

Swirling,
Rushing,
Surging,
She carves through hills,
Sunders plains,
Buffets the earth,
Hurls defiance at the sky;
Wave chasing wave,
Wave expediting wave,
Eastward, on and on,
To the great sea ahead
And the rising sun.

Left behind now
Snow-capped mountains,
Flower-scented highlands,
Darkling valleys
And seething rapids.
Sunk deep below her waters
The cheerless chants of boatmen,
Poets' laments,
Slaves' chains,
Pirates' wrecked ships....

Each drop of water
Comes from mountain torrents;
Each wave is a giant
Hunting down the sun;*
A hundred shoals,
A thousand bends
And ten thousand rocks bar her way,
But on she surges,
Eastward, ever on.

II

East flows the mighty Yangtse....
All that longs for the sun,
All that longs for the sea,
All that longs for the dawn,
All rivers and streams,
Make haste and merge in one.

They come, they come,
Roaring down from the snowy mountains,
Dashing through the forests,
Fighting their way through the hills,
Undulating through the grasslands,
Leaping from the horizon,
Sputtering from under the earth;
They come, they come,
Smashing chains,

*Allusion to a giant in Chinese mythology who died of thirst while pursuing the sun and whose staff changed into a peach orchard. This myth symbolized men's heroism in the struggle against nature.

Drying tears,
Bright red tassels on their spears,
Red banners flying;
Through the smoke of battle,
Braving wind and rain....

Each wave leaps for joy,
Each drop of water sparkles,
Swept up in a mighty tide
Of rolling billows,
Advancing as one,
Towards one goal,
To the strains of one song;
War drums clear the way
Before this invincible force;
Clouds turn pale,
Hills quake for fear.

The river grows apace
And broadens out
From a trickle at Tungtienho*
To a vast expanse of waves
When she nears the sea.
Well is she called the Great River!
The Tungting Lake,** eight hundred li across,
Is too small to serve as her foothold;
And the three million *now* of Taihu Lake***

*In Chinghai Province.

**In Hunan Province.

***In Kiangsu Province.

Cannot hold the lapel of her swirling gown
Once her sons have rallied in force
Like clouds filling the sky.

III

East flows the mighty Yangtse....
But what have we here?
Some sandy islands
Dot the lower reaches
Like stains upon green silk.
No need for alarm,
Sand and mud
Will always silt up
But they can never stop
The rolling river.

Do not boast, sandy isles,
Of your wild geese and swans;
No storm-petrels these
To brave the wind and rain.
Do not boast
Of your rustling white reeds,
These are simply
White flags of surrender.
What folly to think your red smartweed
Can lure the mighty river from her course
Or turn her into little brooks and streams;
What folly to think the breeze that bends the rushes

Can melt away that ceaseless battle song
Or turn it into sighing.
Ahead are the ocean
And the morning sun.
Nothing can stem this torrent,
Nothing can check these waves;
Only pebbles and shells will be left
To adorn your sandy shores.

The sons of mountain torrents
Must charge on;
The children of waterfalls
Must speed ahead;
The heirs of mighty rivers
Cast not a glance
At tranquil sandy islands;
Each drop of water
And each speck of foam
Mingles with the racing torrent,
Hurling spray
Through the clouds and mist
As they rush to the sea.

IV

East flows the mighty Yangtse....
Today's waves
Succeed the waves of yesterday,
Today's battle songs
Succeed the songs of yesterday;

Never ceasing,
Never turning from their course;
Behind them rise the heroes' monuments,
Range upon range of mountains;
The rolling waves
Are a triumphant poem.

Shells and sand are left
On the river-bed and both banks.
Swept from upstream,
From the river's tributaries,
From fords,
From sudden bends. . . .
Let them remain.
Wind will weather the stones,
Waves will scour the sand;
But the river,
The Great River,
Must roll on
Towards the east,
Towards the sea,
Towards the sun.

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi

Hsi Hung

Reportage from Viet Nam

By the Hien Luong River

With a glowing sun overhead, we arrived at the demilitarized zone north of the 17th parallel.

The bridge across the Hien Luong River spans two different worlds. Even the earth and sky seem different. On the southern side it's dull and cloudy. The yellow three-striped flag of the puppet government hangs listless, half curled about the pole. Beneath that flag, the land is sombre.

On the northern side, like a flaming torch held aloft by some giant hand, flies the gold-starred red flag of north Viet Nam. The pole seems taller than the antenna mast of a radio station, the flag bigger than the red plush curtain of a theatre stage. In the glorious sunlight

Hsi Hung is a writer and reporter who made a visit to the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam last autumn. These three sketches were written after his return.

it seems to encrimson the entire sky. Beneath it are gold and jade-green rice fields, villages whose new red-tiled roofs can be seen through darkly verdant shade. Gay lads and lasses, wearing conical straw hats, farm implements on their shoulders, go smilingly to the fields. Singing children, bags of books upon their backs, file towards school along the paths.

Beneath the bridge the pale yellow river flows softly, bearing pain and hatred, bearing the inseparable love of dear ones on opposite banks, bearing their longing for the peaceful unification of the motherland.

I had heard a soprano in Hanoi sing *By the Hien Luong River*. Now, standing at the northern end of the bridge, I recalled the lyrics:

By the Hien Luong River I gaze to the south,
Filled with longing for my village home.
Are you expecting all the time
A heavenly wind to carry your longing songs north?

Today, though the same flesh and bone, the south is cut off from the north by the Hien Luong River. The route between Hanoi and Saigon is blocked. Along the 17th parallel the American imperialists have erected a wall bisecting Viet Nam. In Vinh Linh area where the river starts its journey to the sea, even homes and farms are divided. Folk on the northern bank say to their southern neighbours: "We're of the same country, the same province, the same county, the same village, the same family." What a poignant cry.

Two soldiers beneath a tree stand guard at the northern end of the bridge. The placid waters of the river reflect their red armbands with their large gold stars. One of them, whose home is on the southern bank, came north with his unit in 1954 for what, under the terms of the Geneva agreements, was supposed to be a temporary period until nation-wide elections would be held in 1956, but the American imperialists and their southern puppets had prevented the election. Now this soldier, when he goes to wash his face by the river's edge every morning, sees his young wife on the opposite shore also washing and combing her hair. Day after day, month after month, year after year, they have only these brief glimpses of each other. The coconut palms the soldier planted on the northern side and tend-

ed so carefully have grown tall and strong. Stretching their leafy green hands they wave gently in the breeze to the south. Little gusts across the river bear also the fragrance of the purple flowers blooming in the beds the soldier has laid out along the shore.

Along the high railing of the bridge a dark shadow flits. A policeman of the southern puppet government, wearing a black helmet and black sunglasses, stands with shoulders hunched. Vaguely apprehensive, he peers through the railing at the river. To his left on the north bank a huge red banner reads: "People of the whole country unite, oppose the American imperialists and their lackeys!" The policeman doesn't raise his head. He turns towards the right.

There, on the opposite side, are barren hills on which only weeds and wild shrubs grow. It is a world of death and desolation. A locust-like ten-wheeled army truck careens along the road, shrieking insanely. It halts to pillage in a village of withered trees on the left. Instantly the air is rent by the screams of women and children, the wild cackling of hens, the terrified squealing of pigs.

An old man in a white shirt squats upon the bank. Nearby sits a young man wearing a conical straw hat. The puppet government's yellow three-striped flag hangs above them. They are gazing to the north.

Tall betel-nut trees and swaying bamboos line the northern shore like dear relations. Fields of golden rice smile in welcome. Rolling north beyond the big red banner, the land is pregnant with rich crops. On the threshing-floors are hillocks of grain. A smile fades from the face of a girl, a member of an agricultural co-op, as she stares across the shining waters of the Hien Luong and worries about her underfed dear ones in the south.

She remembers the year when they were celebrating the Spring Festival in the north with drums and cymbals. She saw children with baskets on the southern side then, searching through grassy patches along the river for edible herbs. That year in the south they didn't even have cassava. The people on the north side packed rice into tubes of bamboo and floated it across in large quantities. Fishing boats from the north set sail laden with sacks of grain. Out at sea

they transferred these to fishing boats from the south for delivery to their southern neighbours. Every village on the north shore of the river, every family, raised a few more chickens, planted a little more land, saved a bit more grain from their own table, and got it to their dear ones in need. Though the river separated them, their hearts were as one.

In Hanoi I had met many comrades from the south who had been transferred during the "temporary" regrouping period. Ten years had passed and they were still being kept apart from their dear ones, just as the two parts of the country were being forcibly prevented from reuniting. Their eyes lit up when you mentioned the south. They thought of it constantly. It was the home of their mothers, their wives, the land of their birth. Everywhere in the south were their relatives, their comrades, their fellow fighters. How they loved to hear on the radio news of their bold struggles, the cadenced inflections of southern songs. How they treasured the cautiously worded letters from the south that slipped through to them one by one.

On the banks of the Hien Luong I gained a truer understanding of the south. I learned that on the scales of the southerners' hearts, north and south had equal weight.

A girl guerrilla who had just crossed the river from the south told me in an emotional voice: "Every day, working in the fields, we can see the gold-starred red flag on the northern shore, and we think about the north."

How the people of the south long for national unification. That is why this girl, and many other girls and boys like her, join in destroying the "strategic hamlets" in co-ordination with the Liberation Army. The girl's mother is a Liberation Army secret message relay, her younger brother is also a guerrilla. Her whole family is fighting for the south, and for the north as well.

At this village on the 17th parallel the river empties into the sea. People busily come and go on the high slopes on the north side. Fairs are held in the groves of papaya trees. Consumer co-operative shops do an active trade. There are crowds of customers. Children are playing. The river winds down to the sea from the heights in the southwest.

On the opposite side, the sky is dark and overcast. The hills are brown, the fields are barren. By the river mouth on the south side there are only sand dunes and scrub brush. The place is not livable.

High on a terrace north of the mouth of the river a northern security soldier boldly stands guard, a red armband with a gold star on his sleeve. At his side is a tousle-headed puppet policeman of the reactionary government, his hands clasped behind his back. The roaring of the sea in his ears, gazing at the rushing river below, the soldier looks angrily at the river mouth, which has arbitrarily cut in half. Yet the tousle-headed puppet policeman timidly insists: "Saigon is free, we'll wipe out the Communists..."

At this moment a broadcast from the radio station of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation resounds. After a stirring song, a voice with a lovely southern accent says: "Stand together with the Liberation Front, brothers. Destroy our common enemies — U.S. imperialism and its lackeys. They're on the road to ruin."

The puppet policeman wags his head and tries to whistle nonchalantly. But his face is grey. Slowly he puts on a pair of dark glasses, leaves the terrace, and walks away alone.

Sing out, you Hien Luong River. Tormented river, how can one half of your waters belong to the south and one half to the north? Blow, you winds, roar, you waves. The sea welcomes you, enfolds you, indivisible river. On the blue waters of the bounding sea, fishing boats from both sides meet, Vietnamese together, sailing side by side over the deep. Gazing at the clouds of smoke above Con Co Island, the fishermen excitedly discuss the people's latest victory. Together they share sorrow and anger, together they smile.

Canh Duong, a Fishing Village

Amid green groves of pine and tall coconut palms along the south bank of the Long Giang River, red-tiled roofs and rows of boat masts could be seen. We had reached the pretty village of Canh Duong by the sea. Leaving the highway our car entered a long narrow lane. Written on a wall ahead in large eye-catching white letters was the slogan: "Shut the enemy's boasting mouth!" I seemed to hear in this famous fighting village the earth-shaking indignant voice of the whole Vietnamese people.

I had first heard about Canh Duong from the vice secretary of the Workers' Party committee of Quang Binh Province. How his eyes had shone. It had been late at night but he had talked animatedly, leaping from his seat behind the vase of pink flowers to pat the ground as he told how the villagers dug holes in their floors for air-raid shelters, sweeping his hand over the wall as he related how they built a barricade around the entire village with peep sights for their guns. Canh Duong, the way the secretary described it, was a wall of bronze, always invulnerable.

In the eight years of war of resistance against France, he said, every one of the 735 families in the village had worn mourning. In every household someone had been killed. But not a single family had gone over to the enemy.

Since liberation, production had been good in Canh Duong, and order had been restored. When the American raids started in August 1964 the people of Canh Duong, in keeping with their revolutionary tradition, fought the attackers whether they came by sea or from the air.

Now the fighting village appeared before us, ancient and strong. Thick moss covered the roofs and the walls of the houses. High walls of coral, erected by the villagers, twisted through the lanes like battle fortifications. Others cut off traffic at street corners. From a large tree with late blossoming red flowers in the centre of the village hung a big empty bomb-shell. This was the village bell. It rang when people were to go to the fields, or set out to sea. It also sounded



the alarm when it was time to fight. To permit quick passage openings had been broken in the compound walls. In these and in the walls of the houses gunsights had been bored. Dug-outs were cleverly concealed in every home. Canh Duong was a steel fortress, inside and out.

Beneath a carambola tree I was introduced to Truong Van Thich, assistant leader of the village militia. Pointing at a red-tiled roof, he said: "A French lieutenant stood on that roof, directing his men. We brought him down with one shot."

Truong was only a nineteen-year-old militiaman when the French landed one morning in large numbers on the shore. More than a thousand of them advanced on Canh Duong under the covering fire of four warships and twelve planes. Beating drums and cymbals, the villagers had jumped from their trenches and charged. They fought the enemy from compound to compound, from house to house, and finally drove them back into the sea.

Today Truong is second in command of the village militia. They have a new enemy and a new task: "Shut the American imperialists' boasting mouth!" The men and women of the militia carry their guns with them into the fields and when they go out to sea. The moment the alarm sounds, the fields, the sea, become battlefields.

One of the People's Army men gave me some examples of the fighting spirit of the Vietnamese people. On the fifth of August 1964 at dusk he met two old women, one sixty and one seventy, waiting by the river for the ferry. They were both from Canh Duong. "What a pity we're not home," they said to him. "We can't take part in the battle." They said they envied the people who were remaining in the village.

He told me what happened that day. The U.S. imperialists, losing in the south, were trying to solve their dilemma by attacking the north. That morning six American jets from an aircraft carrier strafed Canh Duong. Truong and his militiamen quickly gathered near the coast and vigorously returned the enemy's fire with rifles and machine-guns. Truong, who wielded a light machine-gun, kept shifting it about, firing now from a wall, now with the weapon propped on a wild pineapple bush. His eleven-year-old son dashed out from home with more belts of ammunition and helped feed them into the gun.

A Vietnamese fathom-measuring boat, a kilometre out to sea, also opened fire on the planes, while running for shore. Several

enemy planes circled the craft and strafed it, the bullets spraying up geysers of water. Truong shouted to his men to protect the boat. In an instant, every rifle and machine-gun on the shore was pumping lead at the attackers. From a Canh Duong fishing boat, a bit further out to sea, a number of old fishermen also joined in the fray with their rifles.

Two days before, on the night of the third, the militia had driven off two American warships. Militia chief Nguyen Quyen had just set sail with two fishing boats when they ran into the American vessels, which loomed up suddenly less than three hundred metres away. The enemy sent up two signal flares. Nguyen fired a few shots towards shore to alert his men, then he and the fishermen opened fire on the enemy.

The Americans began shelling the village, at the same time strafing the fishing boats with machine-guns. Truong, assistant militia chief, rushed down with his men to defend the coast. They fired at the dark shapes of the enemy craft. Before long Nguyen and his crew returned to shore. The combined forces of the militia finally drove the enemy off. Then the fishing boats again set out to sea.

Another pair of American warships invaded Viet Nam's territorial waters the night of the fourth. The village militia patrolled the coast all night, determined not to let the imperialist aggressors make trouble at their front door.

Looking east down the lanes of Canh Duong you can see the ocean waves breaking against the shore. A line of wild pineapple bushes and dense pines and firs screen the village like a green wall. Beneath the burning sun white sails dot the sparkling sea. That nearby round isle was approached by an American warship the night before I came to Canh Duong. An American launch sailed right up to Goat Island, off that point to the left.

Along the beach by the line of firs, Pham Nga, a white-haired old man of sixty, patrols till dawn. With eyes a bit bloodshot he gazes at the sea and says: "I hate the American imperialists. If they try to land I'll slaughter them with my knife, one by one."

The night of the fourth there were over eighty old men like him guarding the shore.

One-armed army veteran Nguyen Hong, now head of the fish sauce factory, was on guard by the coconut palms on the edge of the village. His factory is right on the beach. He and all the workers, men and women, patrolled that night fully armed.

The deep blue sea is all around Canh Duong, a village that fights as well as it produces. All its people, young and old, are warriors. By the shore the firs whose branches were shattered by shell fire are already sprouting. The wrecked homes have been rebuilt. Neither enemy planes nor ships can destroy Canh Duong. It's solid steel. Fishing villages fight. The people of Viet Nam can never be conquered.

Looking at the broad sea before me, listening to its thunderous surf, I seemed to hear that mighty roar: "Shut the enemy's boasting mouth!"

A Young Gunner

Anti-aircraft gunner Nguyen Minh is only seventeen. A Youth Leaguer, he joined the army February last year. I met him in September at a conference held by his unit in the city of Vinh. He was covered with decorations. I asked eagerly about his fearless behaviour during American air strikes. Nguyen's political commissar only said simply: "Two enemy bombs dropped very near him. He wasn't afraid and went on with the fight."

The boy smiled at me. But the meeting ended and I had no chance to question him.

That night I met him again. He was quite at ease, talking and laughing with the other people in the room. Later, his black eyes flashing, gesticulating a bit, he related his experiences in a serious, even manner. His voice was that of an adolescent, but it was charged with a nobility of spirit.

Last February, though under age, he pretended to be a year older than he actually was, and joined the army. His background was simple — joined the Children's League when he was very young, then the Pioneers when he was a bit older, and finally the Youth League. His ideal was also simple — to grow up quickly and become a soldier of the people's army so as to defeat the American imperialists and unify Viet Nam.

Nguyen came from Thien Phu Village in Thien Hoa County, Thanh Hoa Province. He had been active in his village Youth League group and everyone liked him. Early last year he again went to the office of their farmers' co-op to get on the scale and plead with the co-op chairman to let him become a soldier.

"You weigh enough at last," the chairman laughed. "Go ahead."

From then on, Nguyen was a man among men, though in the army he was affectionately known as Little Devil. He was assigned to be Number Four on an anti-aircraft gun and promptly fell in love with his job. Hearing the commissar tell how the courageous Vietnamese soldiers during the battle of Dien Bien Phu fought against enemy planes, he couldn't wait to perfect his skill. If American planes dared to invade, he and his mates would blast them out of the sky.

On August 5, 1964, American jets appeared twice over their position. Nine planes the first time, seven the second, very suddenly, skimming the hilltops, bombing and strafing as they swept by.

The anti-aircraft gunners were ready. This was their chance to prove their skill. The city of Vinh was in the Nghe-Tinh Soviet Area, the birthplace of President Ho Chi Minh. They couldn't let the enemy despoil it.

When the first batch came, they opened fire. This was Nguyen's first direct participation in fighting the American pirates. "The U.S. imperialists aren't so tough," he thought. "Knock 'em down and we'll have a celebration."

His gun had fired only thirteen rounds when the enemy planes scrambled for altitude. They didn't dare dive.

"Nice shooting," the battalion commander shouted to the gun crew. About a thousand metres up, an enemy jet, smoke trailing



from its wings and tail, started plummeting into the eastern sea. Peasants cheered and applauded. Then another plane burst into flames and fell towards the south.

Nguyen wanted to leap for joy, but as a soldier of the anti-aircraft he couldn't relax his guard. He stood by his gun, scanning the heavens.

The second flight attacked their anti-aircraft batteries. Rockets and bombs hit on all sides of them. They were engulfed in black smoke. But they stuck to their guns. Shouting encouragement to one another, they returned the enemy fire.

Nguyen, who was carrying ammunition, tripped over a small tree that had been knocked down by a bomb. He calmly picked himself up and delivered the shells to the gun. Ordinarily he could carry a clip at a time. Now he somehow found himself able to carry two without feeling the least bit tired.

Another bomb came spinning down like a top and landed beside him. Luckily it didn't explode. Nguyen glanced at it casually and trotted on with his load of shells.

After the enemy planes were driven off, the regimental commander said: "We mustn't be satisfied just because we've downed a few American jets. Those dogs are fierce. They're sure to come again. We've got to be ready to give them a still hotter reception."

He asked Nguyen: "Are you scared of the American planes?"

"Not me. I joined the army to fight the American imperialists," the boy replied. "Though it's not hard clipping their planes with our small ack-ack guns, it's not easy either. The main thing is we've got the will."

One day at the end of August the regimental commander gave him some good news. The Air Defence Corps of the People's Army had decided to send him as their representative to Hanoi, the capital, for the nineteenth anniversary celebration of the founding of the republic. On the first of September, Nguyen spent the happiest afternoon of his life. In the Residence of the President, he saw the great leader of the Vietnamese people. President Ho Chi Minh, surrounded by people, waved at him, then walked over and said:

"You're very young-looking for a soldier. How old are you — nineteen?"

"Seventeen. I said I was a year older than I really was when I joined the army," replied Nguyen.

President Ho laughed, and the boy smiled. The President raised a glass of red wine and proposed: "Let's drink a toast to this young soldier." He handed another glass to the boy. Nguyen accepted it respectfully and drained it in one swallow.

The next morning on the presidium in Ba Dinh Square he met President Ho Chi Minh for the second time.

"Were you men very tired after your battle on the fifth of August?" the President asked him.

"Not a bit. We got added energy with each American plane we brought down," replied Nguyen, removing his hat.

The President stroked the boy's hair. "Young soldiers like you, shooting down American jets," he commended.

The head of the delegation of the central committee of the Venezuelan Communist Party, who was standing near by, walked over and shook Nguyen's hand. He said: "Viet Nam's soldiers may be young, but they shoot down U.S. planes. It makes me very happy. Some people are afraid of the American imperialists because they have good weapons. But you're wonderful fighters. We in Venezuela are also waging a fierce armed struggle. We too have the will and the determination to defeat U.S. imperialism." He presented the boy with a golden Venezuelan commemorative badge.

With red banners raised on high, carrying fresh flowers, the people in the square cheered and sang. Strength flowed through the boy's veins. He wanted to rush back to his unit, to study hard, work hard, improve his political consciousness, perfect his fighting technique. No matter how savage the American imperialists might be, he and his comrades-in-arms would smash them.

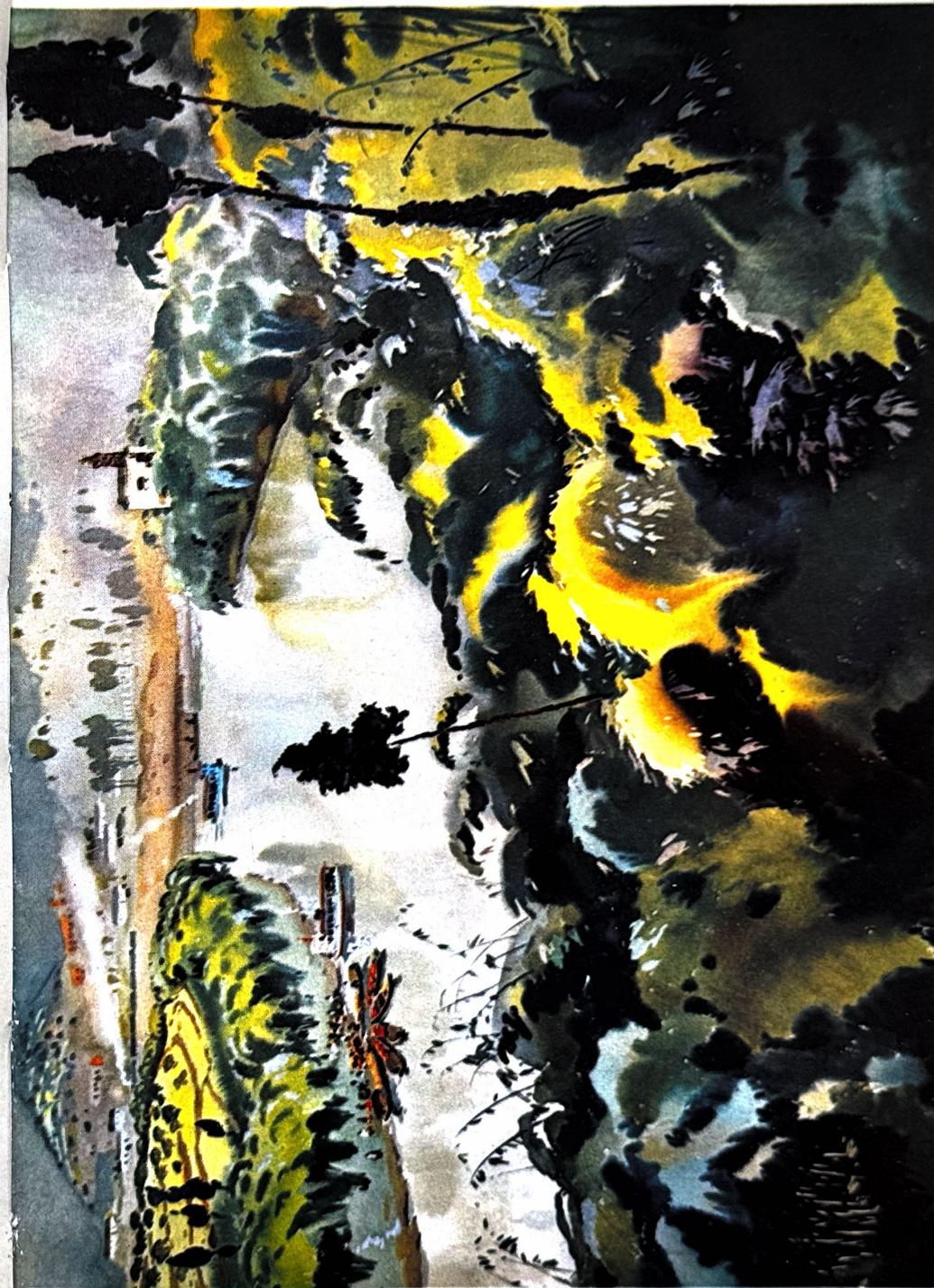
Translated by Sidney Shapiro

Illustrated by Yang Yung-ching

A New Scenic Spot (water colour) ▶

by Huang Wei-yi

Huang Wei-yi is a young water-colour artist from the southwest. He paints mostly landscapes. This painting is of a scene outside the mountain city Chungking.





Yuan Ying

The Voice of a Heroic People

Deep is the friendship between Viet Nam and China;
We are comrades as well as brothers.

This concise description of the close relationship between the Vietnamese and Chinese peoples was written by President Ho Chi Minh of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. And this deep friendship between two peoples who have long been comrades-in-arms is vividly reflected in all fields of life, including art and literature.

The literary ties between China and Viet Nam go back to the thirteenth century or earlier. Many classical Vietnamese writers had a good knowledge of Chinese literature and sometimes even wrote in Chinese. Similar customs and social conditions as well as related languages facilitated learning from each other and cultural interchange,

Yuan Ying is a poet and essayist. His works include two volumes of essays *Torch of Africa* and *North and South of the Hungbo River* and the collections of poems *Rivers and Lakes*, *Growing Up Beside Chairman Mao* and *Poems Sent to the Thomas Lake*.

which reached unprecedented proportions after the Chinese people's liberation. There are now more contacts than ever before between Chinese and Vietnamese writers, and many Vietnamese works have been made available in translation to the Chinese reading public. I want, briefly, to give my impressions of some Vietnamese writing in Chinese translation I have recently read.

At the end of the eighteenth century Nguyen Du wrote a poem of more than 3,200 lines entitled *Kim Van Kieu* which was adapted from a Chinese novel. As soon as this was published in Chinese in 1959 by the People's Literature Publishing House, Peking, it aroused great interest among Chinese readers, who find its content and historical background familiar since it gives a picture of sixteenth-century China. It tells of a beautiful and talented girl named Thuy Kieu, who was kidnapped and sold to a brothel, but through all her sufferings and hardships her heart remained as innocent as a white lotus flower unstained by mud. Nguyen Du ruthlessly exposed the feudal rulers and voiced the people's longing for freedom and justice. This poem conveys his sympathy for the people and his admiration for virtue and pure love.

This long poem is still so popular in Viet Nam that when I visited the country with the Chinese Writers' Delegation in October 1956 I heard an old village woman and a young woman worker in town reciting some of the most moving stanzas. The poem is widely read in China too. To me it represents the union of Chinese and Vietnamese literature and is a monument to the close literary ties between our countries.

But the most popular Vietnamese poems in China are those written in Chinese by President Ho Chi Minh. I saw the original manuscripts in the Central Library in Hanoi in 1956, and they were published here in 1960 to celebrate the president's 70th birthday. Our Chinese Writers' Delegation was privileged to hear from Ho Chi Minh himself how these poems came to be written. Holding his hands together as if he were handcuffed, he told us that after his arrest by the Kuomintang reactionaries in the province of Kwangsi in 1942, he was imprisoned for a whole year, and during that time he put all his joy,

anger and grief into the hundred short poems which make up this collection. At the beginning of the book he wrote:

My body is in prison
But my spirit roams free outside;
To achieve a great task
In spirit we must range wide.

These lines indicate the lofty tone of the whole book. Reading it, one forgets that these poems were written in prison but seems to hear a great revolutionary talking to his comrades. Here are three examples:

Dawn

Every morning the sun rises over the wall
To shine on our locked cells;
The cells are still dark,
But ahead of us is light.

Cock-crow

You are simply an ordinary cock
Yet how loudly you crow each day to announce the dawn;
And it is no little thing
To arouse men from their dreams.

Evening

Roses bloom, roses fade,
Bloom and fade relentlessly;
But their fragrance seeps into our cells
Conveying their sympathy for the men inside.

There is not a hint of gloom or sorrow in these poems which express high ideals and infinite faith in freedom, using homely yet poetic images to voice the confidence and optimism of a revolutionary.

President Ho Chi Minh was writing in dark days for the Vietnamese people under the rule of the French colonialists, but at the same time a resolute underground struggle was being waged under his leadership and that of the Communist Party. After the revolution of August 1945, the Vietnamese fought for another eight years for national liberation. The stirring happenings of this period and the many

heroes who fought and gave their lives for the cause of liberation supplied Vietnamese writers with inexhaustible material.

In 1956 in Hanoi the talented young Vietnamese author Nguyen Ngoc told me about his first novel *The Village That Wouldn't Die*, which was later published in Chinese and has aroused wide interest. After the 1945 Revolution in Viet Nam the French colonialists with their superior military strength seized the cities and main lines of communication in Viet Nam and started to attack the mountain areas. Nguyen Ngoc, then living with the Ba-na people in the mountainous region of central Viet Nam, joined in their resistance to the colonialist forces. When French troops surrounded the villages and cut off their salt supply, the people used the ashes of burned straw as a substitute. When the enemy set fire to their houses and crops, a whole village would often move away to keep the colonialists from getting grain and conscript labour. The village in Nguyen Ngoc's novel evacuated thirteen times, moving from a valley to a mountain peak.

"Our people had a hard time," Nguyen Ngoc told me. "They had to use their bare hands to fell trees, open up waste land and dig up the wild cassava roots deep in the earth. We were reduced to eating buffalo hide. The French colonialists were vicious brutes. They set fire to the villages and seized all the choppers, axes, bows and spears, knowing how scarce iron was there, and thinking that without iron tools the Ba-na people must starve...." His book provides colourful descriptions of the superb scenery of south Viet Nam and shows the terror of the French when they entered those beautiful mountains, which bristled with bamboo spikes and traps. Death threatened them from underfoot, from the trees, and even from the air. Nguyen Ngoc gives a vivid picture of the heroism of the people of the south in their grim struggle against the colonialists. The hero of his novel Nup develops from a simple, brave village lad into a leader of the partisans and a seasoned, resourceful revolutionary.

If we compare *Kim Van Kieu* to a gentle and moving song and *The Village That Wouldn't Die* to a symphony, the collection of poems *South Viet Nam Fights On* can be likened to a clarion call or the thunder of battle drums. Published in Peking in 1964, this collection of 51 poems by 31 poets from both north and south Viet Nam deals with

the struggle of the Vietnamese people today. Whether writing in Hanoi or the jungles of the south, all the poets issue the same powerful call to the whole of Viet Nam: Liberate the south and unite the motherland!

To Huu begins his famous poem *The South* with these lines:

If a friend should ask me:
Of all the sounds on earth
Which is the sound that goes straight to our hearts?
My answer would be: The south!

If my love should ask me:
Of all the names on earth
Which is the name that stands for unchanging love?
My answer would be: The south!

To Huu's work has the evocative musical qualities of classical Vietnamese poetry, but its heroic revolutionary passion is distinctively his own, and his style reminds me of a limpid spring from a high mountain flowing through a flowering plain. His love for the southern part of his motherland and the people of the south is matched by his strong hatred for U.S. imperialism and its henchmen who are trampling over the south and obstructing the unification of the country. His poetry seems as clear and bland as wine, and like wine it warms your heart and fires your blood. This poem voices the deep love of the 17 million people of north Viet Nam for their brothers in the south.

Because of obstruction and sabotage by the U.S. imperialists, for ten years the Hien Luong River on the temporary military demarcation line at the 17th parallel has cut the beautiful land of Viet Nam into two, dividing brothers from each other. That is why this river figures in so many Vietnamese poems, symbolizing boundless longing and ardent love. In *South Viet Nam Fights On* different poets view the same river from different angles. Luu Trong Lu writes in *The Waves of Cua Tung*:

No boat in the world but puts in to the shore,
No shore in the world but serves as a mooring-place;

Why is it, with only one stream between,
No boat of ours may moor at the southern shore
And none of our people may visit loved ones there?
With only one stream between,
Why can I only wave my hand and strain my eyes towards the south?

In *Mist Mantles the Far Shore of the Ben Hai** Hoang Trung Thong writes:

One river rent in two by tears,
One bridge like teeth tightly clenched;
Cold mist mantles the south,
But behind that cold dank mist
The flames of war
Are burning ever brighter.

The ardent desire of all the people of Viet Nam is to pull out this sword which has been plunged through their heart and to smash the hell on earth created by the U.S. imperialists and their puppets in south Viet Nam. The poets have put into words the longing of all their compatriots. Their songs of golden paddy and green bamboo glades, little streams and broad highways, the tears of mothers, the longings of young brides, and the pledges of fighters, all have the same theme — the motherland must be re-united, the criminal imperialists and the reactionary regime must be destroyed. The struggle of the people in the south is gaining in strength; they have full confidence in their victory. This is expressed by Thanh Hai of south Viet Nam at the end of his poem *We Stand in the Forefront of the Battle Against U.S. Imperialism*:

The people of the south
Are fighting in the forefront of the battle against U.S. imperialism;
The flames of liberation blaze high in the raging wind,
Our hearts are full of hope and brightness.

The same revolutionary confidence is evident in other works recently translated such as *Letters from the South*, the short stories in *Storm in the South*, and the two collections of reportage *Stories of the War*

*Ben Hai is another name for the Hien Luong River.

in *South Viet Nam* and *The Fighting Youth of South Viet Nam*. Most of these are not the work of professional writers but of soldiers, housewives, students or old people who have taken part in the just struggle against U.S. imperialist aggression. They describe their own experiences or those of their friends, their own aspirations, joys and sorrows, and their unity as they work for one common cause. Fresh, optimistic and revolutionary, these simple accounts show us the heroic sons and daughters of Viet Nam loyally upholding their national dignity and refusing to submit to force. It is only natural that the heroes they present have been taken to the hearts of the Chinese people.

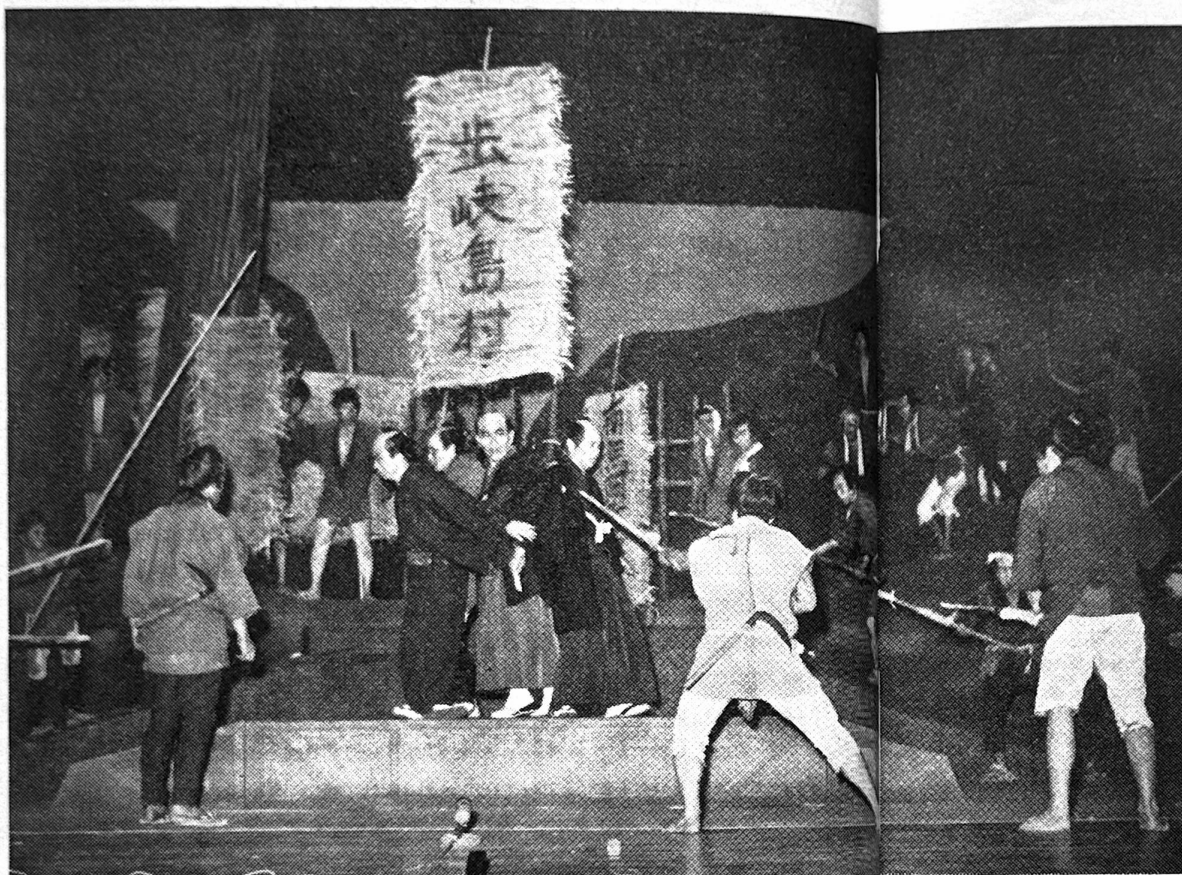
Impressions of Modern Japanese Drama

The Japanese Modern Drama Delegation, consisting of eighty-one artists and other members of fifteen well-known Japanese troupes, visited Peking this spring and presented four plays very different in style but all having a topical significance and distinctively Japanese flavour. They were the historical play *Peasant Uprising in Gujo*, the modern drama *New Year's Eve* depicting the class contradictions in a capitalist society, *The Japanese Phantom* which exposed the crimes of the U.S. imperialists and Japanese militarists in recent times, and the beautiful folk legend *The Bamboo Maiden* which showed sympathy for the labouring people and satirized the feudal ruling class. These varied themes convey the spirit of all the highly realistic performances, their emphasis on the need to struggle for freedom and resist oppression.

Peasant Uprising in Gujo depicts the historical eighteenth-century peasant revolt in Gujo, Minonokuni, against the cruel exploitation of the feudal rulers. The playwright Hiroshi Kobayashi presents this class struggle in the countryside with deep feeling, bringing out the militant spirit and indomitable courage of the Japanese people and creating a splendid peasant hero, Sadajiro. The peasants' struggle is an arduous one. Again and again they receive crushing blows from the village head and the reactionary government, but instead of retreating they learn from each defeat, reorganize their ranks and go forward in greater unity. Peasant leaders like Sirozaemon and Sadajiro, who are fearless in the face of death, inspire the people to fight to the end. Owing to the limitations of their times their struggle and appeal to the government failed, but their spirit of self-sacrifice remained an inspiration to the people. Indeed, Sadajiro personifies the indomitable resolution of the Japanese people and the spiritual link between this generation in Japan and their forbears. The play graphically points out the truth that where there is oppression there must be revolt. Though the uprising in Gujo failed, the struggle went on. As long as oppression exists on Japanese soil, the Japanese people will never cease to struggle against it.

Peasant Uprising in Gujo was brilliantly produced by the most experienced director Tomoyoshi Murayama with militant fervour and great artistry. In spite of the large cast, complex plot and big mass scenes, the central message came over clearly and forcefully. This was no mean feat. The strong realism of this poignant tragedy underlined the ideological content and revealed the different temperaments of the chief characters. Technically, every detail was so well coordinated and the timing so perfect that the whole production seemed a gripping, deeply moving symphony. The depiction of village customs and the use of folk dances and folk songs helped to convey the thoughts and feelings of the peasants and their heroes, gave the production a specifically Japanese style, and enabled Chinese audiences to enter into the sufferings and aspirations of the Japanese people, thus strengthening the friendship between our two countries.

The part of Sadajiro was played by Osamu Takizawa, leader of the delegation, with deep inner conviction and consummate artistry.



A scene from *Peasant Uprising in Gujo*

The image he created of a Japanese peasant hero left an unforgettable impression — the audience sensed his unspoken thoughts and feelings. From the time when he makes up his mind to go to Edo at the risk of his life and appeal to the government, Sadajiro grows in moral stature in the course of struggle. Imprisoned in a cage, he swears to carry the struggle to the very end; in gaol he rejects a merchant's shameless advice to capitulate; having escaped, he goes home to say farewell to his family before setting out again to meet his death.... Here we see the gradual growth of an ordinary peasant into a splendid hero,

and these scenes were acted truthfully and movingly with no trace of artificiality.

Sirozaemon, played by Taketochi Naïto, appears phlegmatic but is actually militant and the actor fully expressed the character and spirit of this peasant hero. A vice leader of the delegation, Eijiro Tono gave a fine performance in the role of the despicable village head Matazaemon, who wavers between the government and the peasants. This turncoat provides an excellent foil for Sadajiro. The whole cast made a brilliant team, achieving artistic unity in their performance.

The Japanese Phantom reveals the same militant resistance to oppression. The playwright, Yuji Koyama, has given a graphic picture of daily life in the wealthy family of Ayame Sunami in Isohama and of the people around her, and of the bitter experiences over twenty years which gradually increase their political understanding. Disaster has struck this family as well as the people of the next town, Hananoshima. It is due to the poison gas made by the Japanese militarists and the atom bombs and military bases of U.S. imperialism.

Harsh facts teach the Japanese people that only by taking part in the patriotic struggle against U.S. imperialism can they find a way out.

Saburo, the grandson of Ayame Sunami, is conscripted to make poison gas in a secret plant in Hananoshima. He is poisoned by the gas and on the point of death cries out in anger, "It is ludicrous for anyone to believe that Japan is an independent country." Kikuko Danjo, Ayame Sunami's younger sister and a victim of atomic radiation, points out that to build up a beautiful and happy Japan they must



A scene from *The Japanese Phantom*

first drive out U.S. imperialism. If even wealthy, upper-class families are revolting against the old way of life, it is obvious that the sufferings of the labouring masses must be even greater and their revolt must be more resolute and powerful. The contradiction between the people and the U.S. and Japanese reactionaries is growing more acute all the time. As the curtain falls we know that a storm is brewing. A mighty movement to resist U.S. imperialism will certainly sweep Japan.

The directors of this play, Koreya Senda and Koji Abe, have given it a distinctive style and thrown its central theme into strong relief. The action covers a period of more than twenty years and there are over seventy characters, but the changes in the life and outlook of the chief characters are skilfully portrayed so that the plot unfolds smoothly. The grim facts are presented in a restrained yet forceful, vivid yet serious style with a clear rhythm and effective contrasts. The successful sound effects, contrasting simple folk songs with jazz and the ear-splitting din of U.S. planes with bird-song by the sea, emphasize the crimes of the U.S. occupation forces who are trampling the beau-

tiful land of Japan underfoot. The stage effects contributed brilliantly to bringing out the main theme of the play.

Haruko Sugimura, another vice leader of the delegation, gave a successful portrayal of Kikuko Danjo who renounces a comfortable life to marry a Communist. After her husband's death in prison she surmounts many difficulties to bring up their two children, does all she can to help the other victims of atomic radiation, and resolutely joins the struggle against U.S. imperialism. Her simplicity and staunchness are depicted along with the change in her outlook as she grows older. Eijiro Tono acted Gunzo Hiroyasu, a fisherman who joins the arsenal and is poisoned by the gas. Gunzo Hiroyasu is an irrepressible individual although the fascists poison him body and soul, and certain comic traits in this tragic figure, certain flashes of humour in his serious reflections, add depth to the depiction of his character. Sachiko Murase gave an authentic interpretation of Ayame Sunami, the old noblewoman. Etsuko Ichihara in the role of Kozueko, a worker's daughter who is forced by necessity to take a job as a barmaid, revealed vividly how an innocent young girl is taken in and ruined by the decadent American way of life.

The Japanese Phantom shows us the insidious nature of the so-called culture of U.S. imperialism. Poison gas destroys men's bodies but decadent culture corrupts them without their knowledge until their spirits are benumbed and enslaved. All the actors, whether playing large parts or small ones, worked together well as a team and gave a highly polished, well co-ordinated performance.

Another programme of modern Japanese drama consisted of two plays with quite different styles, *New Year's Eve* and *The Bamboo Maiden*.

New Year's Eve by Mantaro Kubota is adapted from the story of the same title written in 1868 by the famous woman novelist Ichiyo Higuchi. The stage version has retained the critical realism and tense precision of the original. The dramatic conflict arises between Ayako, second wife of the landlord Kahei Yamamura, and her maid-servant Omine. Ayako is a typical landlord's wife, crafty and miserly, eager to get the whole property into her hands and drive away the son of the former wife. Kind-hearted Omine wants to help her

uncle who has lost his job through illness, but her request for an advance on her wages is naturally refused. In desperation she steals some money, but then feels so guilty that she is tempted to commit suicide. The contrast is most effective between the arrogant, self-righteous Ayako who lives in comfort by exploiting the labouring people, and Omine who suffers physical and mental anguish simply because she wants to help people of her kind in distress. Although the maid does not consciously revolt, by exposing the injustice of the social system the play shows the inevitability of class struggle.

Ichiro Inui, the director, gave this play a classical style. Skilfully interweaving the conflict between Ayako and her stepson and the relationship between Omine and her aunt with the main conflict between Ayako and Omine, and emphasizing this last, he brought out the central theme incisively. The characters were presented according to their different social status but without making them stereotyped. On the one side there were the landlords and bourgeoisie, on the other the working people; but different members of the same class had their distinctive features. Here tendentiousness and truthfulness were well blended.

Hukuko Sayo gave a convincing and dramatic portrayal of Ayako, not merely impersonating her gestures and movements but revealing her heartless, mercenary spirit. The part of Omine's aunt, though not a large one, was superbly played by Haruko Sugimura, who subtly conveyed the old woman's conflicting emotions — the diffidence with which she asks help from her niece for fear of getting her into trouble, and the mingled joy and shame with which she receives the money. The landlord's part was even smaller, consisting only of some conversation with his son; but Osamu Takizawa who played this role is a fine, seasoned actor who showed the reactionary class nature of this landlord-capitalist. Shigako Chimegi played Omine with deep feeling and a penetrating insight into the industry, goodness and unselfishness of this servant-girl, who brought tears of sympathy to the spectators' eyes.

The Bamboo Maiden by Ichiro Wakabayashi, directed by Shunichi Nakamura, is a folk legend in three scenes. The bamboo maiden symbolizes art and beauty and is also a symbol of joy, for after a hard



The Bamboo Maiden

day's toil her singing and dancing enable the villagers to forget their fatigue. Nobles and high officials ask for her hand and she promises to marry the one who can carry out the difficult task she sets him. To protect her, the peasants find endless ways to thwart and discredit the suitors so that in the end none of them wins her. Art belongs to the people, is created by them, and serves to encourage them. Different types of oppressors seek to monopolize art for their own enjoyment, while the people use every means to safeguard it from contamination by the ruling class. However crafty the oppressors may be they are fundamentally stupid, and however oppressed the people may be true wisdom is theirs; thus the reactionary rulers never succeed in appropriating art which must always belong to the people. This was the truth we learned from *The Bamboo Maiden*.

Traditional Japanese music and folk dancing were a distinctive feature of this gay, swift-moving comedy, with artistic exaggeration emphasizing its fairy-tale atmosphere. The heroine's qualities recalled the resilience, strength and vitality of the bamboo, which can withstand wind and rain. This exquisite blend of music, dancing, art, poetry and drama was a sheer delight to watch.

These four plays presented by the Japanese Modern Drama Delegation provided Chinese audiences with a magnificent panorama of life in Japan from ancient to modern times, both legendary and real. But the Japanese writers and artists are not content with objective portrayals of life. Their works embody their strong sense of love and hatred, showing a marked tendentious quality. They take the side of the exploited and oppressed against all who attempt to enslave them. Thus we can say that the fight for freedom and resistance to oppression are the common themes of these plays, which reflect the Japanese people's strong resistance to U.S. imperialist aggression and control and their demand for independence, democracy, peace and neutrality.

The Japanese playwrights and artists have successfully applied the realist method to achieve a real-life contemporary atmosphere which cannot fail to grip the audience. Sometimes realism is linked with positive romanticism. For example, in the last scene of *Peasant Uprising in Gujo* the people are sacrificing to their dead heroes when thunderous drum-beats suddenly fill the air and stirred by the tumultuous music the peasants dance wildly to express their anger and longing for revenge. For although the uprising was crushed, the storm of struggle is bound to rage more fiercely. Here realism and romanticism are linked.

This realism is closely bound up with the national style—the dramatic dialogue, charming folk tunes, simple dances and local customs which conjure up the daily life of the Japanese people. Not only were the sets of these productions distinctively Japanese, but so were the life and customs, the thoughts and feelings portrayed, and all these brought out the national character. The use of the realist method and the Japanese national style were the common artistic feature of the plays presented, and this is a great contribution made by the Japanese drama workers to the struggle against the decadent, reactionary art of U.S. imperialism.

Ho Yung

National Minority Artists

On the next page is a reproduction of the coloured woodcut *Clearing the Way* by Chhoekyaldaba, a Tibetan in his twenties. It is a simple depiction of an everyday incident. A truck transporting building materials high up on the Tibetan Plateau finds its way blocked by snow and the local people come to give a hand in clearing the road. This scene, though commonplace, is significant. And the Tibetan woman in the foreground epitomizes the historic changes which have taken place. The pleasure she takes in the work is self-evident and the reason for this can be found in the artist's own experience.

Chhoekyaldaba, born in a family of slaves, grew up under the infernal serf system and saw for himself serfs treated as if they were cattle. The women fared even worse, being looked upon as "accursed" and often exposed to perish as soon as they were born. Since his mother was a slave in a monastery, Chhoekyaldaba became

Ho Yung is a young art critic at present working for the Union of Chinese Artists in Peking.



Clearing the Way

a *drapa*, or monastery slave, at the age of seven after her death. He had to toil like a grown man on starvation rations and slept in thin rags in the freezing cave where sutras were stored. When he could no longer endure it he ran away. Tibet was liberated then and the people's government took the homeless Chhoekyaldaba under its care and sent him to primary school where he displayed a special aptitude for art. So in 1959 he was sent to the training class for national

minorities in the Szechuan Academy of Fine Arts. *Clearing the Way* is one of many works with a fresh feeling and content by young minority artists, which are a new feature of Chinese art.

Many of China's fifty-odd nationalities had a slave or serf society in the past, so that the labouring people lived in dire poverty with no chance to develop their talents. Since the liberation, however, serfs, slaves, poor peasants and herdsmen have become masters of the new society. In order to develop national minority culture and art and to train minority artists, amateur artistic activities have been organized while various art academies have made a point of enrolling minority students. Special art courses and training classes for them have been set up in the Central Institute for Nationalities and in the art academies of the southwest where there are many nationalities.

The training class of this type organized by the Szechuan Academy of Fine Arts in 1956 recruited more than seventy students from the Tibetan, Yi, Chiang, Pai, Tai, Aini and Mongolian nationalities from Ahpa, Kantse, Liangshan and Sichang in Szechuan and from Tali and Hsishuangpanna in Yunnan. Most of these students are the children of serfs, poor peasants or hired hands who toiled for slave-owners and suffered from cold and hunger right up to the time of liberation. Now they are conscientious students who are rapidly mastering artistic techniques and acquiring a general education. Since 1961 graduates have been returning to their homes to teach or to popularize art and culture in cultural centres while doing creative work at the same time. Their past experience, the depth of their feelings and their confidence in the future give their works a forceful and distinctive style.

My Childhood, a series of vigorously executed woodcuts, shows Chhoekyaldaba's early life: His mother toiling under her master's



Mother Studying

whip, climbing a long flight of monastery steps with a heavy burden, and being pushed down from a high wall and killed by an angry monk. With bold exaggerated lines, Chhoekyaldaba depicts himself as a boy crying over his mother's dead body, a fierce storm raging around him. Next he appears wandering alone in the shadow of a huge, dark building. Still another print shows him hunched up in a corner at dead of night. But the last of the series presents a striking change, for in it a government worker is taking a Tibetan boy with his bedding roll to a bus: Young Chhoekyaldaba is going to school.

Al Kop, a young woman artist of the Yi nationality, depicts a more tragic life in her series *My Mother*. Being slaves on Liangshan every

member of her family had to work in heavy fetters. They broke their fetters one dark night and escaped, knowing that their master intended to sell them. But there was no place of refuge for them in the old society. They were recaptured soon enough and savagely punished. One print shows her mother being dragged by the hair and whipped, after which she is fettered again. Her grandfather is hanged, her grandmother beaten to death. Only after liberation do those who have survived become their own masters. The mother is now a model worker in a commune while her children work in government offices. Al Kop, her youngest, was sent to school at six by the government and is now studying in the Szechuan Academy of Fine Arts where she has proved to be a promising artist. The last print of this series, *Mother Studying*, shows a kindly old woman learning to write and on the wall behind her are a certificate for a model worker and a red flower worn by people's delegates. Though Al Kop's mastery of technique is still imperfect and her compositions tend to be somewhat simple, her work is arresting owing to its strong class feeling.

Injustice, an oil painting by the young Uighur artist Hajeamet, is based on the judgement passed in a "religious court" before liberation, allowing a landlord to take a peasant's daughter in lieu of a debt. There are more than thirty characters in this picture which epitomizes the old society. A pot-bellied landlord in the middle with a fierce dog listens arrogantly to the obsequious judge while his underlings behind him, whips in their hands, drag the girl away from her father. Her dishevelled hair, her cap on the ground, her struggles and cries for help, all express her terror. And the despair on her grey-haired father's weather-beaten face and his arms stretched out helplessly reveal untold sorrow and suffering. The crowd watches in silent indignation. A middle-aged peasant, gazing with sympathy at the father and daughter who are forced to part, is pulling his own frightened child closer to him while an old itinerant minstrel on a donkey, an instrument in his hands, stops to watch the scene. He must have seen many tragedies in his life and will certainly note this injustice and sing of it to the people. Two peasants, shouldering their tools, apparently just back from the fields, are infuriated. They seem prepared to fight while the others, too, glare at the landlord.

A storm is brewing. Hajeamet is a keen observer and this is a subtle, evocative composition.

Many works depicting our new life have been produced by young minority artists. The oil painting *Striding Ahead* by Yao Yung-mao, an Yi, shows two robust young men under a bright sun. The expressions on their raised faces, their brawny hands and buoyant

Striding Ahead



steps all suggest unlimited strength. Since he comes from a poor family himself Yao Yung-mao has a profound insight into the feelings of the former Yi slaves and their pride now that they are freed from their fetters and chains. The whole picture conveys the confidence and strength of the two young men as they stride ahead on the road to socialism.

Song of the Water by the Pai artist Yang Lung deals with the mechanization of agriculture in a far-away mountain area and the happiness of four Pai girls watching an electric pump irrigating the fields. The youngest one seems hardly able to contain herself for joy at the sight of the foam. The two girls beside her gaze excitedly ahead, as if conveying their joy to those afar. The eldest among them is sitting lost in thought, as if the sound of the water reminds her of the past. And the terraced fields in the background show that the construction of this region is in full swing.

The Tung artist Lung Kai-lang is another one who has made many woodcuts about the changes in his native Kweichow. *A Rainy Night*, a coloured woodcut, depicts two Tung doctors preparing to make the round of their patients one stormy night. One has his medicine case over his shoulder, his eyes fixed on the torrential rain outside while the woman doctor lights a lamp. This is only a trivial happening in daily life. But in the past a poor patient could never hope for treatment, let alone on a wild night in the mountains where there were no transportation facilities. This young artist has paid special attention to bringing out the spirit of the two doctors. The Chiang artist Ah Hsin's coloured woodcut, *Red Scarf*, has the freshness of a painting by a child. With thick rough lines he has sketched a Chiang child with the red scarf of a Young Pioneer. Innocent gladness shines in his eyes and hovers about the corners of his mouth.

These works with a new content have caught the attention of art lovers in China. They figure now in many exhibitions and have won praise from critics. The national minority artists who have come to the fore in various parts of the country, are becoming a new force to reckon with in the ranks of Chinese artists.

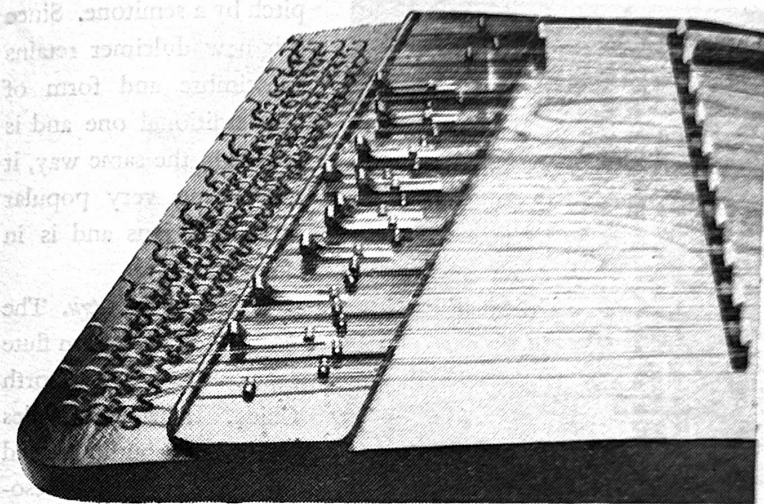
Information

Reform of Traditional Musical Instruments

Judging by archaeological finds, there were skilfully made musical instruments in China as early as the sixteenth century B.C. During the long period since then Chinese music has developed, new instruments have been introduced and constant improvements have been made. However, in the last hundred years and especially during the first half of the twentieth century the influence of colonial culture in semi-feudal and semi-colonial China gave rise to a vogue for Western music and a lack of interest in Chinese music, with the result that little was done to further improve the traditional instruments.

Mao Chi-tseng is a young research worker in the Institute of Chinese Music.

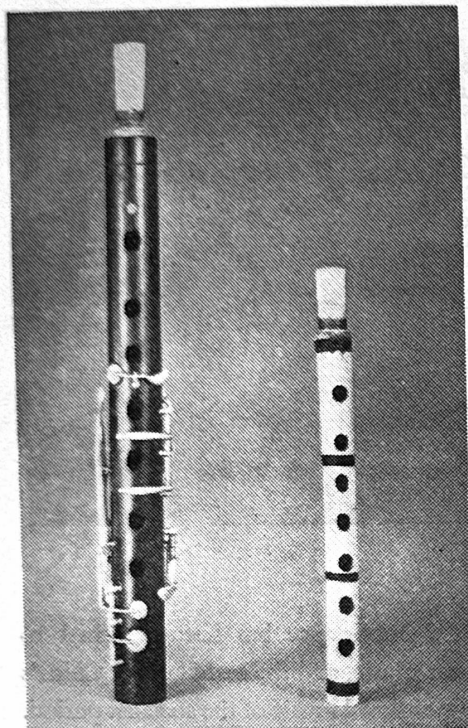
Mao Chi-tseng



The quick-change dulcimer

Since liberation unprecedented importance has been attached to inheriting and developing Chinese music, and the main task of China's musicians today is to create a new national music of the socialist period. To achieve this it is necessary to increase the range and expressive power of the traditional instruments, and priority has been given to this task. In the last ten years many experiments have been carried out along these lines with considerable success. With the exception of a few percussion instruments, most of those used in fairly large modern orchestras have been improved upon to varying degrees. Here I will cite a few examples only.

The Quick-change Dulcimer. The dulcimer is popular all over China. It has a wooden sound-box with metal strings which, struck by a bamboo hammer, produce pleasing melodious notes. Unfortunately this delightful instrument is difficult to tune and transpose and is therefore inadequate for playing complex scores in different keys to reflect our new life. Now Yang Ching-ming of the Central Broadcasting National Orchestra has produced this "quick-change dulcimer" by the addition of a metal transposing groove. The strings are attached to a roller in this groove which can be shifted to raise or lower the

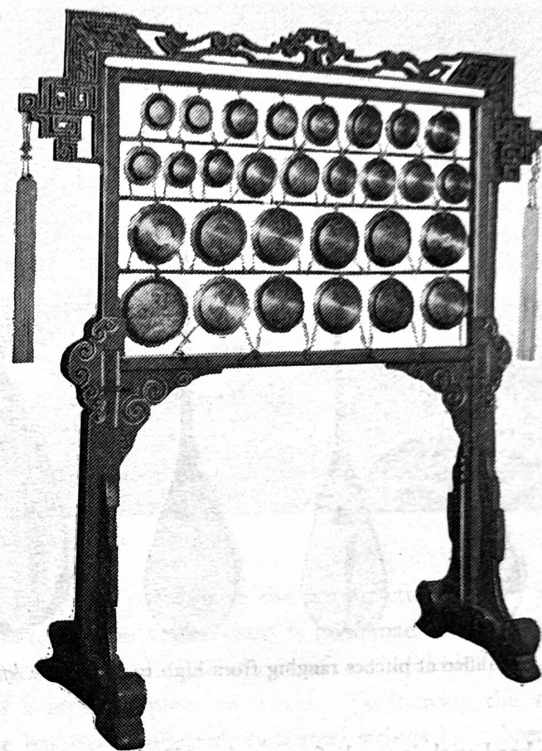


The keyed *kuan-tzu* (left) and traditional type of *kuan-tzu* (right)

modern orchestras it is too loud and strident for gentle melodies and fails to harmonize with the other instruments. Moreover, the eight finger-holes produce a diatonic scale only, not the different keys and semitones required by modern instrumental music. Chang Chi-kuei, a folk musician who has joined the art ensemble of the political department of the navy, succeeded after several years of experimentation in making a keyed *kuan-tzu* longer than the traditional type and with a harder mouthpiece, which produces softer and more melodious sounds. His *kuan-tzu* has six additional keyed finger-holes, bringing the total number of holes to fourteen. This gives it a larger tonal range and it can also produce chromatic scales. Since the eight original finger-holes have no keys, players can still use the traditional folk music techniques.

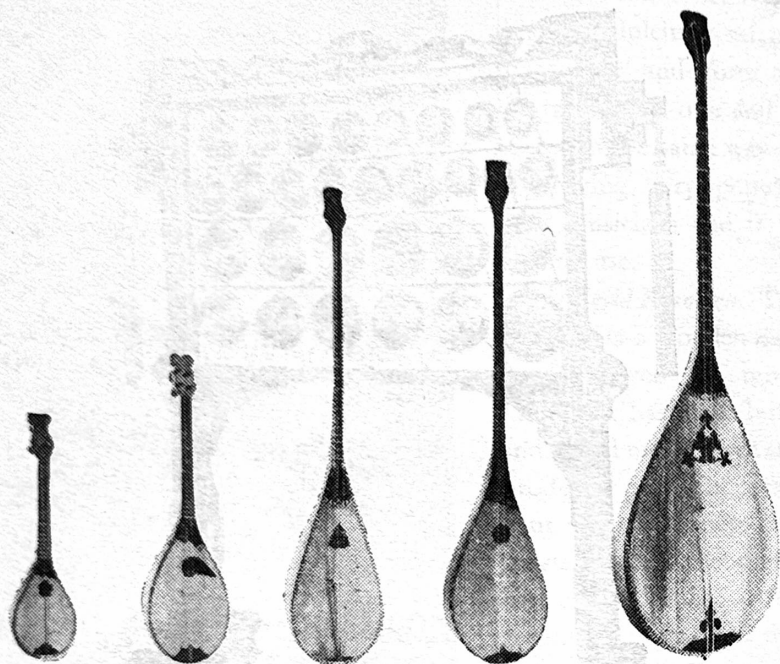
pitch by a semitone. Since this new dulcimer retains the timbre and form of the traditional one and is played in the same way, it is proving very popular with musicians and is in general use.

The Keyed Kuan-tzu. The *kuan-tzu* is a wooden flute much played in north China. It has eight holes and a reed mouthpiece and produces powerful, resonant notes. Chinese folk artists through the centuries evolved such a fine technique on this flute that they could even imitate falsetto singing and the natural human voice on it, but when used for stage accompaniments or in



The enlarged set of gongs

The Enlarged Set of Gongs. Chinese gongs are well-known throughout the world and include a tremendous variety with different timbres. The gongs in a set have different pitches. They are beaten with sticks to produce complex melodies. The traditional sets of nine or ten gongs in folk bands emit shrill, sonorous sounds which heighten the colour and rhythm of orchestral music. The Shantung Vanguard Art Ensemble's traditional orchestra has improved the quality of its gongs to make the timbre more mellow and increased the number in a set to twenty-nine, extending the sound range and adding semitones. In place of one stick, the player now uses two, and they have further developed their technique. One stick now has a hard rubber pad, the other a soft one. When deep, shrill vibrations are



Dumbras of five different pitches ranging from high to low (from left to right)

needed, the hard stick is used; for more muffled sounds, the soft one. Now that the gongs' expressive power has been so much improved, they sometimes play the leading role in the orchestra and special works have been composed for them. In these new compositions the enlarged sets of gongs are capable of a new style and spirit beyond the resources of the traditional set.

The Improved Dumbra. The *dumbra* is the most popular stringed instrument among the Kazakh herdsmen on the Sinkiang grasslands. The traditional *dumbra* is carved out of one block of tamarisk or pine wood with eight or nine strings made of sheep gut, and its sound range and volume being rather small it is suitable for solo performances but not for orchestras. The *dumbra* orchestra of the Art Ensemble of the Ili Kazakh Autonomous *Chou* in Sinkiang has made *dumbras* of five different sizes and five pitches ranging from high to low. The former eight or nine tones have been increased to seventeen, enlarging



A reed-organ orchestra

the sound range. To facilitate the manufacture of this instrument and save material, the sound-chest is now made of several planks of wood instead of being hollowed out of one solid block, and the stem is made of a separate piece of wood. To increase the volume the sound hole has been enlarged, two steel strings have been added to the two *dumbras* with the highest pitches, while the sound-chest has been made shallower and larger. The orchestra with this set of improved *dumbras* has given highly successful performances and this reform is much welcomed by the Kazakhs.

The Improved Reed-organ. The reed-organ, peculiarly rich in harmonics, is popular in southwest China in the minority areas. Almost every Miao village in Kweichow has its own reed-organ band, all the men can play this instrument, and during festivals boys and girls dance to the gay accompaniment of several dozen reed-organs. This instrument has a most distinctive shape. Its rectangular wooden sound-box tapers off at one end and in this are inserted from one to six bamboo pipes with copper tongues and finger-holes in the lower part. Delicate gradations of sound are produced by the vibrations of the tongues. The Kweichow Song and Dance Ensemble has made a fairly comprehensive study of the various types of reed-organ in

the province and its new reed-organ orchestra has introduced a number of reforms in the instrument. It now has eleven pipes to enlarge the sound range and can play seven-note scales instead of only pentatonic scales as in the past. Moreover, reed-organs of different sizes are used. This new reed-organ orchestra is thus able to perform not only traditional reed-organ tunes and folk music but also modern Chinese and foreign compositions.



The Hunter's Return (traditional painting) by Chao Po-su (1124-1182) ►

See article on p. 117.



Introducing a Classical Painting

one of the greatest Southern Sung artists who excelled in many genres: human figures, landscapes, flowers, birds and beasts. It is quite possible, though not absolutely certain, that this painting is his work. None the less, it is a masterpiece long and as centuries wide. Designed for use on a screen. These screens were commonly used in halls and each one might have twelve or sixteen such paintings, to which, small as they were, artists devoted all their skill.

The Hunter's Return

The painting shows a horseman equipped for hunting and his mount. The horse has not yet been unsaddled and the antelope caught is still over its back as it stands with drooping head, tired out, while the hunter screws up his left eye to examine the arrow in his hand. This scene conjures up all the ardours of the chase. The exhaustion of the horse suggests that it has been galloping with its rider all day across hills, streams and forests before at last stopping to rest. The rider's concern over his arrow makes it easy to visualize him dismounting and pulling the shaft out of his game to see whether its feathers are damaged or it is bent. His pleased expression shows that this arrow is unspoilt and can be used again next time. The way in which this depiction of a man and a horse suggests scenes outside the painting reveals a high degree of artistic mastery.

The artist's name does not appear on the painting, but according to the title written in the Chien Lung period (1736-1796) of the Ching dynasty it was the work of Chao Po-su (1124-1182), a noted painter of the Southern Sung dynasty whose vigorous landscape *A Myriad*

Pines can be seen in the Palace Museum, Peking. Chao Po-su was one of the versatile Southern Sung artists who excelled in many genres: human figures, landscapes, flowers, birds and beasts. It is quite possible, though not absolutely certain, that this painting is his work. Done on silk, it is 22.2 centimetres long and 25 centimetres wide, designed for use on a screen. These screens were commonly used in halls and each one might have twelve or sixteen such paintings, to which, small as they were, artists devoted all their skill.

The Hunter's Return

CORRECTIONS

In our last issue (No. 7) on p. 5, the first paragraph under Scene 1 should read "July 1960, during the days of independence in the Congo (L)." Also on p. 23, under Scene 3, the last sentence of the fourth paragraph should read "Over the gate hangs a United Nations flag, with the official emblem of the United Nations in white, centred on a light-blue background."

Chronicle

Poets Meet

On April 29, Chinese and foreign poets in Peking held a poetry recital to support the patriotic fight of the Vietnamese people against U.S. imperialism. Noted poet Kuo Mo-jo, chairman of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, presided at the meeting. He read his latest poem *Fearless Heroic Nation* in which he flays the Americans who believe that weapons are all-important in a war and pays warm tribute to the victories of the Vietnamese people.

Other poems presented at the meeting included: *The South* by the well-known Vietnamese poet To Huu and *To the North* by the south Vietnamese poet Thanh Hai, both expressing love for the people in the north and south parts of the country as well as their staunch resolution to reunify their motherland. To Huu pours out his longing for "the south, standing erect amid flames of war," while Thanh Hai fervently acclaims the invincible people of the north who "never yield an inch to the American gangsters."

Bamboo Spikes and Johnson and *Viet Nam, Oh, Heroic Viet Nam!* were recited by their respective authors Yuan Shui-po and Tsang Keh-chia, while contributions from Kuang Wei-jan, Li Chi, Ho Ching-chih and other well-known Chinese poets were delivered by actors and actresses.

Sobron Aidit of Indonesia, Rewi Alley of New Zealand and Premaratne of Ceylon also recited their own poems, all brimming over with the spirit of internationalism and support of the Vietnamese people's just struggle.

Works by more than twenty poets were recited at the meeting.

Sixth Shanghai Spring Music Festival

The Sixth Shanghai Spring Music Festival was held this May and lasted for nine days.

This festival has been a yearly affair since 1960. Professional musicians and dancers as well as amateurs from factories, villages and schools this year presented over 200 items, most of which were based on real life and clearly marked with the spirit of the time. Vocal and instrumental music as well as dances expressing support for the patriotic struggles of the Vietnamese and Dominican peoples had pride of place in this festival and were its most distinctive feature. Many items reflecting construction in China today were also presented.

The performance of *The White-haired Girl*, a full-length modern ballet adapted from the opera of the same title, attracted much attention as this was the first attempt made in Shanghai to reflect our revolutionary struggle in ballet form.

Film Week Commemorating the Victory over Fascism

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the victory over German fascism, the Ministry of Culture sponsored a special film week in Peking, Shanghai, Chungking and other cities. Twenty-four films were shown, including the Soviet films *The Great Turning-point*, *Battle of Stalingrad*, *The Fall of Berlin*, *An Ordinary Soldier* and *Zoya*; the Albanian film *Song of the Eagle*; *Thälmann*, *Operation Teutonic Sword* and *Council of the Gods* from the German Democratic Republic; *Border Street* from Poland; *Waves of the Danube* from Rumania; and *Silent Barricade* from Czechoslovakia. These films made some years ago to reflect the struggle against fascism are still very popular with film-goers in China. *The Fall of Berlin* and *Battle of Stalingrad* made a particularly strong appeal.

French Ballet in China

On the invitation of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the People's Republic of China, the Classical Ballet of France came to China in May and gave performances in Peking, Shanghai and other cities.

The items they performed include *Giselle*, "the Black Swan" *pas de deux* from *Swan Lake*, *pas de deux* from *Don Quixote* and the *Nutcracker Suite* and *Les Forains*. The French artists' fine sense of rhythm and grace won warm applause from Chinese audiences.

The orchestra of the Chinese Central Philharmonic Society performed with credit under the baton of French conductor Jean Doussard.

Man of a Special Cut

by Hu Wan-chun

Gathered here are nine of the best stories written by Hu Wan-chun between the years 1955-60. Hu Wan-chun works in a rolling mill. With the help of the Party he has made speedy progress as a writer. Most of his writings are devoted to the life and struggles of the working class. They graphically reflect the communist spirit of the workers who "dare to think, dare to say and dare to do" during a big upsurge of construction.

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LITTERATURE CHINOISE

(a quarterly)

Our third number for 1965 presents the play *Tam-tam de guerre sur l'équateur* written collectively by the Drama Group of the Political Department of the Navy of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, two stories by the well-known writer Sun Li and new tales written to be told in public by amateur writers. This number in addition publishes works by the eighth-century poet Li Po, as well as various articles on literature and art. It is illustrated by classical and modern paintings.

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